

GUEST PERSPECTIVES

In the annual ASIANetwork brochure there is a brief statement regarding membership in the consortium. It begins, “ASIANetwork member institutions vary in size and style of intellectual community, but share a primary commitment to undergraduate education in the liberal arts and the study of Asia as part of that commitment....” In addition, the consortium announces that one of the key objectives of ASIANetwork is to facilitate conversations among faculty concerning the development and strengthening of Asian studies programs, as well as ways to foster collaboration among institutions.

The editorial board of the *ASIANetwork EXCHANGE* plans to add a new section to our newsletter entitled “Guest Perspectives.” Recognizing the diversity that exists among the over 150 member institutions of ASIANetwork and the importance of soliciting views from all of our constituents, we extend an invitation to all ASIANetwork members to contribute short essays, no more than 1,000 words in length, which express your views about liberal arts education, the field of Asian studies in liberal arts education, or about ASIANetwork and its programs. You are free to write about almost anything that ties into these issues, i.e., particular challenges you face at your institution in strengthening the study of Asia and how you have addressed them, new initiatives you feel ASIANetwork might take to strengthen the study of Asia, the centrality of language study or study abroad in teaching about Asia, and so forth.

Depending upon space constraints, one or more of these perspectives will be published in each issue. Please send copy, if possible as a Word attachment, to Marsha Smith, editor, *The ASIANetwork EXCHANGE* at sosmith@augustana.edu. Disks or paper copy may be sent to:

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The Editors of *The ASIANetwork Exchange* express their regrets that Dr. Eliot Deutsch’s name was misspelled in the Fall Edition, Vol. XI, No. 1, 2003. Please accept our apologies for this mistake.

The Student-Faculty Fellows Program: Enhancing Standpoint Thinking, Collaboration, and the Scholarship of Integration

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“The role of education in a world of uncertainty and ambiguity...is to produce people who are conscious of the process through which they and others are being socialized. This is not just a nicety of democratic principles—it is a necessity of education in a modern multicultural age.”¹

At the recent 2003 Midwest Conference on Asian Affairs, I participated on a panel entitled “Engaging Students in Various Disciplines into Asian Studies,” organized by Professor Chia Ning of Central College. Chia Ning and I became acquainted when we received grants from the 2002 Freeman Student-Faculty Fellows Program to conduct collaborative China-based fieldwork with our students. Structurally, our projects were quite different. Colgate’s five student researchers collaborated to listen to, learn from, and record the daily experiences and opportunities of secondary school girls in Beijing and Shanghai. Central College’s five student researchers undertook distinct projects in the areas of medicine, counseling, environmental and media studies, and English as a Foreign Language education.²

The two projects posed common challenges to teachers and students. Like all Fellows collaborations, both projects confronted faculty mentors with the logistical and intellectual questions associated with study abroad programs. What kinds of academic preparation should students have before entering the field? Should faculty mentors restrict selection of participants to upperclass students with some knowledge of research methodologies? How can projects be structured to minimize language barriers for students with varying levels of (or no) Asian language competency? What kinds of transcultural contributions can students returning from their fieldwork make on their home campuses? How can mentors insure that student research projects include effective evaluation components to help students assess what they have learned? How can faculty members use their participation in the Fellows Program to build stronger bridges between their teaching and scholarship? What is the on-going impact in Asia of student research projects?

The rich diversity of projects funded through the Fellows Program and the divergent institutional capacities for training students in East Asian studies represented by participating colleges and universities preclude simple answers to such questions. Nevertheless, effective projects share certain characteristics. First, they are motivated, in Chia Ning’s words, by a desire to move students, through intensive engagement in the field, “from textbook to life experience and research.”³ Second, because the Fellows Program requires the sharing and dissemination of research results, successful projects raise the profile of East Asian Studies on participating campuses. Students bring to their study enthu-

siasm and insight, enriching the intellectual content of their classes and the experiences of their peers. Particularly on campuses with few Asian studies resources the Fellows program builds institutional capacity and the opportunity for faculty mentors to broaden their intellectual scope and interdisciplinary vision.⁴ Finally, Fellows projects support the hallmarks of liberal learning in a multicultural age, by nurturing standpoint thinking, collaboration, and the scholarship of integration.

The Development of Standpoint Thinking: Teaching Horizontal and Vertical Selves in a Transcultural Era

One of the most important ends of liberal learning is understanding the world as others see it, that is, the cultivation of standpoint thinking. Creating effective means to help students think from others' standpoints is one of the most significant and difficult challenges the world's educators face. As I hope to illustrate, it is also one of the most important outcomes of Fellows projects in East Asia.

The year I received my first Fellows grant, I taught a first-year seminar on American schooling. Early in the semester I remarked to my students that they seemed fearful of intellectual risk-taking. To my surprise, they cheerfully agreed. We spent two class sessions talking about why this might be so, and the students concluded that they "liked their lives too well." The students were fervent believers in the liberal arts, which one seminar participant likened to "the warm safety" of her high school. That a liberal arts education might feel less benevolent caught her off guard. In the end, the students took to their study of American schooling like fish in water. That students approached the subject matter from the perspective of breezy insiders did not make it easy for me to heed Feinberg's admonition to assist students become critically conscious of the ways in which they are socialized.

Students in another course I taught the same semester, on contemporary Chinese society, happily adopted the role of "ignorant outsider." Reporting that they knew "very little" about China, students understood that they were expected to develop some critical awareness of Chinese culture and identity. With the important exception of two heritage students in the course, this process was far from threatening. Because students knew they would only temporarily be trying on the shoes of "others," the pinch of difference involved little discomfort. In fact, the students could not take standpoint thinking very seriously, since that standpoint remained distantly and safely abstract in the classroom.

In contrast, Fellows projects demand the uncomfortable dislocation associated with crossing boundaries as an outsider. Fellows projects engage students in standpoint thinking. Field experiences require that students evaluate how they imagine and locate themselves and others in the world. This outcome resonates with the recognition that, "globalization is not simply the name for a new epoch in the history of capital or in the biography of the nation-state. It is marked by a new role for the imagination in social life."⁵ Students participating in Fellows projects come to understand that their

social imaginations and identities are not only vertically rooted in a particular local history, language, and culture, but also routed horizontally, transculturally. Fellows projects confront students with the dialectical relationship between their local-vertical and global-horizontal selves, and affirm for faculty mentors that this inter-relationship must be attended to if they hope to achieve democratic education.

The Power of Collaboration to Help Students Take Learning Seriously and Help Faculty Take Teaching Seriously

Collaborative learning encourages students to "take learning seriously." In a widely-quoted article examining that process, educational researcher Lee Shulman argues that "learning is basically an interplay of two challenging processes—getting knowledge that is inside to move out, and getting knowledge that is outside to move in."⁶ The collaborative, field-based nature of Fellows projects begins with what students know (inside knowledge), builds upon "outside knowledge" from the field experience, and scaffolds further learning through collaborative reflection upon the relationship between the two. Each student's learning, shared with each other and a wider audience of peers, teachers, and acquaintances in the U.S. and in East Asia, finally embodies the three attributes that Shulman associates with authentic scholarship: "it is public; it becomes an object of critical review and evaluation by members of one's community; and members of one's community begin to use, build upon, and develop those acts of mind and creation."⁷

The communicative, collaborative, and connected nature of such scholarship acts for students as both mirror and window, involving them in two fundamental processes, learning more deeply about and respecting themselves and learning more deeply about and respecting others.⁸ Through field research as "window" students recognize "others," their multiple frames of reference, and gain access to new ways of understanding. Through field research as "mirror" students gain insight into themselves, as beings particularly situated within a diverse world. The window/mirror metaphor, like Shulman's outside/inside metaphor, places critical understanding, relationship, and communication at the center of learning.

Finally, collaborating with students from diverse backgrounds in field-based research helps teachers take teaching seriously. Fellows projects demand of faculty mentors a reevaluation of how their own learning is situated at the intersection of teaching and research, what Ernest Boyer calls the scholarship of integration.⁹ Most importantly, Fellows projects engage faculty in integrative scholarship, drawing "connections across the disciplines, placing the specialties in larger context, illuminating data in a revealing way, often educating nonspecialists, too... fitting one's own research—or the research of others—into larger intellectual patterns."¹⁰

¹ Walter Feinberg, *The Search for a New American Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1993, p. 133.

² See <http://www.asianetwork.org/freeman/2002freeman/Colgate/>, <http://www.asianetwork.org/freeman/>

2002freeman/Central/freemanresearch/ and www.central.edu/

³ Chia Ning, "The Change in Teaching and Learning of China at Central College through the ASIANetwork Student-faculty Freeman Fellowship Program," paper presented at the MCAA conference, Bloomington, IL, October 13, 2003.

⁴ Chia Ning, 2003.

⁵ Arjun Appadurai. 2000. "Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination," *Public Culture* 12(1):1-19, p. 13.

⁶ Lee Shulman. 1999. "Taking Learning Seriously," *Change* 31(4):10-17, p. 10.

⁷ Shulman, 1999, p. 15.

⁸ Emily Styles. 1988. "Curriculum as Window and Mirror." First published in *Listening for All Voices*, Oak Knoll School monograph, Summit, NJ. See <http://www.wcwonline.org/seed/curriculum.html>

⁹ Ernest Boyer, *Scholarship Revisited: Priorities of the Professoriate* (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1990).

¹⁰ Boyer, pp. 18-19.



2002 Freeman Student-Faculty Research Project
Colgate College Presentation, 2003 ASIANetwork Conference



2002 Freeman Student-Faculty Research Project
Central College Presentation, 2003 ASIANetwork Conference