

# Returns to Institutions and Individuals from the Funding of Asian Travel and Seminars

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## Panel abstract by Janice Lee:

This panel will offer the perspectives of faculty who have received funding from a variety of sources which they used to cultivate or enhance their abilities to offer and strengthen curriculum and/or research interests in Asia. In some cases, faculty have developed travel courses for students and in other cases, they have been able to develop on-campus curricular components. Participants will discuss how their individual funding helped them develop their specific areas of interest.

## Interests Realized: A Perspective from Luther College

**Peter A. Scholl**  
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This paper, in keeping with the financial metaphor of our session's title, provides an accounting of how external funding of Asian travel, seminars, and the like have strengthened Asian studies at Luther College. I will attempt to "audit" my own activities to reveal some of the specific "returns" on these "investments" with the aim of giving others an idea of how profitable such investments can be. To some extent I will also discuss the work of colleagues who have also been enlarging Asian study initiatives.

While Luther offers a number of courses in a variety of departments, it offers no Asian languages and has no formalized Asian studies program. We have at least one well-trained Asianist housed in the departments of religion, history, and anthropology, and we have a number of teachers with some training, experience, and interest in Asia in a variety of other departments—most notably, economics/business, education, and English. Despite our limited resources, from the 1960s until 2000, all first-year students did receive some introduction to Chinese history and culture through a required course called Paideia. Typically, Paideia's "China Unit" was about three weeks long, and included lectures and readings in Chinese history and literature, focusing most heavily on the period from the eighteenth century to the 1980s.

Teaching in the Paideia course almost every year since 1977 awakened my interest in China. Then, in 1993, I was one of five Luther faculty members who toured China with other college teachers, supported largely by funds from LECNA (the Lutheran Education Council of North America). LECNA sponsored a variety of travel opportunities for college teachers in the 1990s, and their investment greatly stimulated faculty interest and paid dividends in many

classrooms at a dozen or more colleges. One specific aim of the LECNA-sponsored travel seminar was to stimulate support for Valparaiso's Hangzhou Study Abroad Program. Teachers who participated on the tour were encouraged to send students to the program and to consider becoming resident directors.

Three of us who taught the Paideia China Unit received LECNA support and additional funds from our own institution, with the expectation that our teaching would be enhanced by what we learned through the trip and its associated readings and lectures. That expectation was richly fulfilled, and Paideia instruction on China was noticeably enhanced.

This LECNA China group was key in the formation of the subsequently created Lutheran Colleges China Consortium (LCCC), formed to work with Valparaiso University in sustaining its Hangzhou Study Abroad Program. I attended the meeting at which the LCCC was organized and soon set my sights on preparing myself to apply as a resident director of the Hangzhou program. With that goal in mind, in 1995 I started attending ASIANetwork meetings and enrolled in five weeks of intensive Mandarin at Beloit College. I visited China a second time, courtesy of a second LECNA travel/study opportunity, in 1996.

By now I was on my way and was fast becoming the "China expert" in Luther's general education course, Paideia, taking a greater role in lecturing and curriculum planning of its China Unit.

ASIANetwork provided me with one of the most significant opportunities to become, if not a China hand, at least a China thumb or finger, through my participation in a China Seminar (underwritten by the Ford Foundation) in the summers of 1997 and 1998. Our seminar was led by Professor Richard Bodman, and included ten or so scholars from a variety of disciplines. We spent three weeks in 1997 at St. Olaf College studying Chinese language, history, economics, art, etc. The following summer we reconvened for a three-

week roving seminar in China, staying principally in Shanghai, Beijing, and Inner Mongolia. Participation in the seminar helped flesh-out my meager China credentials. I applied in 1997 for the resident directorship of the Hangzhou program and learned that I was selected in fall of that year. Valparaiso University generously allowed me to sit in on two Mandarin classes during Luther's January term 1998. I met with a group of twelve undergraduates from the Lutheran consortium (mostly from Valparaiso University) in the summer of 1998, and we flew off for a semester at Hangzhou University.

During my four months as resident director, I led a ten-week tour around the country. We took several excursions, including an extended weekend field trip to study peasant life and culture in central Zhejiang Province. I offered two courses to my American students to supplement their Chinese language courses at our host university (and I studied Mandarin alongside them in these classes). Living there, and working every day with contacts at Hangzhou University, made me feel that I had, at last, advanced beyond the stage of tourist and dilettante.

Back at Luther, I organized classroom visits by Chinese scholars for Paideia and other classes. The scholars all were associated with the Hangzhou Program. In addition, between 1995 and 2000, I helped Luther host three Chinese scholars for extended stays with support from the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia. The *guanxi* gained at home with our Chinese guests paid off when I next led study groups abroad.

In 2001, the longstanding China Unit in the required Paideia course disappeared in the ever-shifting tides of curricular change. I have sorely missed it and have acted to do what I could to make up for its loss. I have offered a January term course called *Chinese Literature and Film* and did what I could to continue recruiting Luther students for the semester in Hangzhou (We have had at least four in that program). I have also helped to guide students who are interested in teaching English in China find post graduation positions. Over the past three years, five students that I personally know have taught English in PRC. Three of them have worked with the Amity Foundation's education program, also promoted by the United Board.

One decade out from my first academic study trip to China, I finally led a Luther College study abroad trip to China, our college's first substantial foray into that country. In 2003 I taught a January term study-abroad course, *Chinese Journeys and Encounters*, for credit, in the English Department. We stayed primarily on Chinese university campuses. Our longest stay was nine days at Zhejiang University of Technology. We had other stops at Beijing Foreign Studies University and East China Normal University in Shanghai, before ending our trip with two days, on our own, in Hong Kong. Students read Peter Hessler's *Rivertown* and other accounts of sojourners in China (both Chinese and non-Chinese), kept journals, presented reports on sites we visited, and wrote reflectively on their experiences in China. Two recent Luther graduates, on break from their teaching

duties with the Amity program, visited with our group and even made formal presentations.



Luther graduates Nate Winterhof and Erin Alberty speak at Zhejiang University of Technology to Luther students in January, 2003.

Photo provided by Peter Scholl.



*Chinese Journeys and Encounters* Classmates in China.

Photo provided by Peter Scholl.

Luther College's International Studies program paid my expenses, as well as the director of our programs' expenses, to make a one-week preparation trip in the summer before the J-term course. I have the support and encouragement of the college to repeat this course, or one like it, when our staffing situation permits. Other teachers at Luther also have high hopes of taking classes to China—an Economics and Business study abroad class will visit Hong Kong and Shanghai in January 2005.

I have frequently worked with Janice Yee and her Wartburg colleague, Arthur Lynn Peters, both of them alumni of LECNA trips to China. We have shared ideas and contacts for our respective study abroad trips. Again, the good *guanxi* or networking connections that are put in place by opportunities such as the LECNA trips and ASIANetwork meetings have continued to produce results long after the initially planned experiences covered by the funding have

ended. Indeed, the most notable dividend of all my China involvements, outside the experience of that land and culture itself, has been the joy of collaborating and working with so many faculty and students from Luther and other institutions, as well as making colleagues and friends from a wide variety of backgrounds and disciplines. I plan to continue “digging to China” in any way I can, including:

- bringing Chinese materials into courses not centrally concerned with Asia
- giving occasional presentations to high school and civic groups
- creating Asia-focused seminars in January under the terms of a new curricular plan
- collaborating with other Asia-focused teachers at Luther in a team-taught courses
- creating new internship and study abroad possibilities in China

In summer 2004 I will actively pursue the last goal by spending a month working with a group called China Service Ventures (<http://www.chinaserviceventures.org>). With about a dozen others, I will be teaching oral English to Chinese teachers of English in Henan Province. My Wartburg colleague, Lynn Peters, will visit our project this summer, and we hope that the work CSV has organized will open the way for continued internships, jobs, or study abroad possibilities for our students. At the very least, I’m sure I will meet many wonderful new colleagues and students and my teaching about China will be enriched.

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## China in Small Doses: Benefits & Challenges of Short Term Immersions

### Lynn Peters Wartburg College

#### *Investments*

My personal and professional interest in China dates from the summer of 1994 when, in my second year on the faculty at Wartburg College, I was awarded an institutional grant to participate in a summer teaching program at Guangxi University in Nanning. There were no explicit conditions or expectations attached to this grant, but my first international experience was so fascinating and personally-rewarding that I began thinking almost immediately of ways that I might use China travel and study in liberal arts teaching. Two years later I traveled to China again with the support of the Lutheran Educational Conference of North America (LECNA) and the Lutheran College China Consortium (LCCC), which were attempting to promote interest in developing teaching/study programs in Hangzhou. This second venture into China was useful in a number of important ways, enabling me to visit areas of the country I had not seen previously and giving me the opportunity to nurture and deepen friendships I had established earlier in

Guangxi. Of particular value was the opportunity to travel and establish supportive relationships with colleagues from colleges and universities with similar interests. Although many of us, as individuals, had an active interest in promoting China travel and study, few were true “China Scholars” or affiliated with institutions having established Asian Studies programs. The challenge for most of us has been to find effective ways of integrating China study into a more general liberal arts curriculum, working with scant resources, marginal institutional support, and untapped student interest.

#### *Returns*

For the past decade, Wartburg College has offered a broad range of study abroad options (including one in China), but many students have been reluctant to participate in a program that would take them away from campus for extended periods of time. The costs associated with international study, the complexity of arranging needed coursework around a semester or year abroad, and the limitations that such travel places on co-curricular activities make recruitment for long-term programs difficult (although incoming students now seem to be giving international study a higher priority than in years past).

Wartburg’s 4-4-1 academic calendar, however, presents an alternative option for international study during the *Mayterm*, a 4-week “mini-term” in the Spring when students enroll in a single short intensive course. *Mayterm* courses are typically creative, experiential, and geared toward encouraging students to explore subjects outside their major. Over the years, *Mayterm* courses have been developed by several different academic departments that include travel to Tanzania, Guyana, Israel, and various European sites. Working with the co-director of Wartburg’s Global and Multi-Cultural Studies Program (who shares my commitment to promoting interest in China), I developed, in 1999, a *Mayterm* course constructed around a 24-day visit to China that is now offered in alternate years.

The course, *China in Transition*, was created and offered as an elective option for meeting the “Diversity Across the Curriculum” component of Wartburg’s *Plan of Essential Education*. Courses in this tier of general education are aimed at developing in students a “greater recognition and understanding of the value of human diversity as an enriching aspect of life” and in preparing them for lives of service and leadership in a global and multi-cultural context. *China in Transition* was developed with three specific goals in mind:

1. To expand students’ understanding of the world via an introduction to Chinese culture and society.
  2. To acquaint them, via an immersion experience, with the many and profound ways in which all people are influenced by their culture.
  3. To encourage students to pursue other avenues for learning about Asia, possibly via more intensive semester-long programs or through post-graduate service and teaching opportunities.
- The course initially was limited to twelve participants,