From the Board Chair
P. Richard Bohr

I have just returned from participating in the month-long, eye-opening Pearl River Delta Faculty Development Program, cosponsored by ASIANetwork and the Hong Kong-America Center. The program was funded with a $65,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Education’s Fulbright-Hays Group Study Abroad Program and approximately $6,000 from the Li Ka Shing Foundation in Hong Kong. This remarkable study tour included 16 professors of anthropology, business, economics, history, management, political science, religion, and sociology, each affiliated with a separate ASIANetwork member school.

Throughout South China’s Pearl River Delta, the world’s fastest-growing economic region, our delegation attended over forty lectures and visited factories, government offices, planning agencies, transportation and communication facilities, universities, and NGOs as well as religious and cultural institutions. Our purpose was to assess the impact of rapid economic development on new business enterprises, migrant labor, traditional and popular culture, government leadership, regional planning strategies, and the environment. Our bottom-line question was, To what extent is the Pearl River Delta a portent for the rest of China?

I will publish a full report on this faculty development program in a forthcoming issue of ASIANetwork Exchange, but at this point I want to convey two observations. First, this project exemplifies what the ASIANetwork does best: infuse Asian Studies into the liberal arts curriculum by bringing its member institutions together for interdisciplinary collaboration in faculty, curricular, and pedagogical developments to prepare our graduates for the newly-dawned “Asian Century.”

Second, this Fulbright-Hays project heralds a new level of service to ASIANetwork member institutions.

Now home, my fellow delegates and I will re-enact a similar ASIANetwork routine: collaborate with our deans, faculty colleagues, and students as well as off-campus groups to disseminate what we have learned by revising existing or creating new courses and offering lectures, conference papers, publications, and community outreach. In addition, several of us are already working with our study abroad officers to plan experiential learning activities at some of the Chinese universities we encountered on the trip. Our member institutions, too, will benefit as we circulate our findings via the ASIANetwork website, the ASIANetwork Exchange, the indispensable teachers’ journal Education About Asia, and as we offer panels and presentations at next spring’s ASIANetwork conference to be held at Hickory Ridge Conference Center in Lisle, Illinois on April 21-23, 2006.

This successful knowledge-sharing formula builds on earlier ASIANetwork programs supported by generous grants from the Ford, Luce, and Freeman Foundations as well as occasional grants from The United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia, The Japan Foundation, and The Korea Society that have strengthened Asian Studies among our member institutions. One such program is the Freeman-funded Student-

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During the summer of 2005 ASIANetwork’s headquarters moved from Augustana College, where Van Symons, Executive Director during the past six years, and his colleagues rendered exemplary day-to-day administration, finance and project management, and newsletter production. The new headquarters is Illinois Wesleyan University, where Professor Teddy Amoloza has already assembled a first-rate team. As is abundantly clear from her first Executive Director’s column in this issue of the newsletter, Teddy is a time-honored veteran of ASIANetwork programs, having ably administered the Freeman-funded Student-Faculty Fellows Program since its inception. She is also an inspiring leader, a creative administrator, and is intimately acquainted with every nook and cranny of the ASIANetwork.

As Board Chair for 2005-06, I look forward to working with Teddy and her colleagues. I am also delighted that Professor Phyllis Larson, a Japan scholar at St. Olaf College, is the new ASIANetwork Vice-Chair and, therefore, Chair-designate. With broad experience as a department chair, Phyllis has also managed grants, served on numerous boards, and consulted widely on Asian Studies programs. Teddy and Phyllis will be ideal co-workers on the ASIANetwork Executive Committee.

Managing so many new projects will require even more wisdom, leadership, and energy from our traditional support base, beginning with our member institutions. ... Our new projects will provide even more opportunities for constituent services and opportunities for member institutions to collaborate and learn from one another.

We hope that the newsletter will provide both informative and provocative articles. We welcome responses in the form of letters or commentaries which we may publish to facilitate and enhance dialogue among our members.