

From the Executive Director



From the Executive Director

For the past ten years, I have had the distinct honor of serving on either the board of directors or as the executive director of ASIANetwork. In April, my six year term as executive director will be completed, and leadership of the consortium will be passed into the very capable hands of Dr. Teodora (Teddy) Amoloza. At the same time, the headquarters of AN will be relocated from Augustana College to Illinois Wesleyan University, where Teddy teaches. This means that Mary Doonan, who for the past six years has capably served as ASIANetwork's controller, while asking little in return, and Marsha Smith, Nirmala Salgado, and Anne Prescott, the *ASIANetwork Exchange* editorial team, will also be replaced. I am grateful to these and other Augustana College colleagues and administrators, and especially to Jane Tiedge and Ruth Symons, who capably served as the administrative assistants for the consortium, for their ongoing support of ASIANetwork.

In this, my last "Letter from the Executive Director," I wish to share with you some of the truths I have discovered while working for ASIANetwork.

The vocational spirit is alive and well in America. Those who work for AN have all discovered that much can be accomplished with little if enough people have the heart to dream big dreams and then volunteer to make them become reality. When I was still a child, one of my favorite books was about a little train with a big heart who chugged up and down mountains to the rhythm of "I think I can, I think I can." Tom Benson, David Vikner and a handful of

others "thought they could" create a nationwide consortium of liberal arts colleges committed to strengthening the study of Asia on their campuses, and a little over a decade later, it has happened.

There is amazing strength and creative energy on the campuses of liberal arts colleges. This has been evidenced to me over the past seven years by the applications we have annually received from faculty mentors and their students seeking to participate in the Freeman-funded Student-Faculty Fellows Program. For instance, this year's applicant pool was quite incredible. One mentor, who has lived in Shanghai for 3½ years, wishes to return with five students to examine the sociological and physical changes occurring on four different Shanghai streets to analyze the impact of rapid industrialization, increased migration, and the opening of Shanghai to foreign visitors on local neighborhoods. Another mentor will take four students first to Gansu province and then to Sichuan province in China to analyze the history of water conservancy policies and irrigation maintenance, water rights reform, and the impact of water utilization policies on the reduction of poverty and disease. Another mentor will lead four students, all of whom have studied Japanese and previously been to Japan, back to Japan to study the *Kakure Kirishitan* (Hidden Christians) in Japan, remnants of the Christians driven underground by the early Tokugawa government's persecution.

Many of our colleagues at major research institutions have a keen interest in ASIANetwork. For the past

several years, through the establishment of a “Council of Advisors,” AN has sought the help of key figures involved in Asian Studies, who have counseled us on procuring grants and approaching foundations for funding. Additionally, they have helped us develop stronger ties with the Association for Asian Studies (AAS) and other pivotal organizations. Each year we host our advisors for a luncheon that convenes during the AAS annual conference. The spirit of this group was recently evinced to me by a note I received from Carol Gluck, George Sansom Professor of History at Columbia University, and a member of the Council. Informing me that she is unable to attend this year’s luncheon because of a conflicting meeting at the Organization of American Historians, Carol ended her note in this fashion: “My apologies! I feel that I am not pulling my weight as an advisor except for talking us up all the time. Please give me an assignment, which I will gladly undertake.” Those of you who know Carol know how busy she is, and yet she asked me for yet another assignment. AN has been richly blessed by the support of such individuals.

ASIANetwork has increasingly had the opportunity to form partnerships with other non-profits, therein enhancing AN’s ability to complete our basic mission for promoting student, faculty, and curricular development to strengthen the study of Asia on our campuses. In the last issue of the newsletter, I discussed a new collaboration with the Association for Asian Studies to create guidebooks for the “Resources for Teaching about Asia” series sponsored by the AAS. We have finalized arrangements with the Center for Educational Exchange with Vietnam of the American Council of Learned Societies to enable ASIANetwork member colleges to host teachers from Vietnam’s universities for semester-long stays in the United States, and in return, send a faculty member from the host campus to Vietnam for a month during the summer. Along with the Hong Kong American Center, this summer ASIANetwork will sponsor a faculty development program, funded by the Fulbright-Hays Group Project Abroad Program, in the Pearl River Delta area of South China. ASIANetwork’s ties with the United Board for Christian Higher Education in China remain strong, and a good number of AN member colleges continue to host United Board scholars from all over Asia on their campuses.

The Freeman Foundation and Henry Luce Foundations, our two primary benefactors during the past decade, are concerned for our well being and for the success of our programs. We are deeply indebted to these two foundations for their continuing support of ASIANetwork. I have had the good fortune to work with Houghton and Doreen Freeman, and Terry Lautz and Helena Kolenda of the Luce Foundation, over the past decade. The consortium would be much weaker were it not for the financial support and the guidance of these people.

Although great satisfaction comes from completing a successful conference, launching a new grant initiative, or orchestrating the publication of a book or series of books, no AN program has excited me more than the Freeman-funded Student-Faculty Fellows Program. This pro-

gram has an amazing impact on its young participants, mentored as they are by the faculty from their colleges. For seven years, Teddy Amoloza has effectively managed this program. We owe Teddy and the Freemans our thanks as we prepare to send our 300th participant to Asia this coming summer. I am happy to note that the ASIANetwork board has asked me to take over Teddy’s responsibilities in managing this program as she becomes the new executive director of AN.

Nothing has been as rewarding in my work with ASIANetwork as my interaction with members of the board, particularly the individual board chairs. I have learned a great deal from these relationships and have become life-long friends with many of these persons.

I have gained much more from working for ASIANetwork than I have been able to offer in return. My work for AN has truly been a blessing for me. If anyone is interested in my future plans, please see the photos below.

