

## From the Board Chair



# ASIANetwork at Fifteen: Taking Stock, Meeting New Challenges

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At the time of our next annual conference, ASIANetwork will turn fifteen! This is a tremendous milestone for our organization. We have many achievements to celebrate: a membership that has grown to more than 170 institutions; a lively annual conference; an endowment fund that continues to grow toward our goal of one million dollars; well-run projects such as the Pearl River Delta Faculty Development Program, the Asian Art in the Undergraduate Curriculum Program, the Vietnam Exchange Program, and the very popular Student Faculty-Fellows Program, that have brought us national attention. We have done all of this and more under the superb leadership of three Executive Directors: Marianna McJimsey (1993-1999), Van Symons (1999-2005), and Teddy Amoloza (2005-).

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We hold firm to the core of ASIANetwork's original mission: infusing Asian Studies across the liberal arts curriculum by promoting curriculum development; advancing inter-institutional cooperation regarding study abroad, grant-writing and other concerns; enhancing faculty development; and providing a vehicle for substantive communication through the *Exchange*, the website, and the annual conference.

But we are forced to think about the role of ASIANetwork in new ways because the world, our institutions, and ASIANetwork itself have changed in the last fifteen years.

### *The world has changed:*

- " China, India and Korea have emerged as critically important economic and political forces.
- " "Asias" more accurately describes our area of study than the monolithic term "Asia." By the same token, we cannot ignore the vitality of the "Asias in America."
- " The Web dominates as a source of information, a medium for communication and research, a tool for teaching, a shared social space.
- " The culture of American college students has fused with that in Asian countries in that they listen to the same music, see the same films, and eat the same foods as their Asian counterparts.
- " Travel to Asia is easier than ever, and there is a plethora of study abroad programs available to U. S. students.

### *Liberal arts colleges have changed:*

- " Many now offer Asian Studies, including Asian languages, generally Chinese and Japanese.
- " Our campuses espouse 'new' values such as internationalization, interdisciplinarity, and experiential learning.
- " Many are feeling increased and sometimes intense pressure to provide more professional programs.
- " Many are finding it more and more difficult to survive financially. Even those that are stable financially do not have sufficient resources to initiate new programs.

### *ASIANetwork has changed:*

- " It is a much larger network now with 176 members, compared to 45 founding members.
- " It has become recognized nationally as *the* organization to contact regarding Asian Studies in liberal arts colleges.
- " It has established a very successful record in conceiving, writing, and administering complex, multi-year, multi-country grant projects.

How should ASIANetwork think about its work now? What do we want ASIANetwork to look like at the end of the next fifteen years?

### **The 2007 Conference—Exploring the Tasks Ahead**

The membership of ASIANetwork is invited to attend the 2007 Annual Conference in Lisle, Illinois, to think together about this theme, "ASIANetwork at Fifteen: Taking Stock, Meeting New Challenges." Our keynote speakers will address aspects of this theme, and panels are being organized that will guide and provoke our thinking as an organization. We can expect that the world and our member institutions will change perhaps even more rapidly in the next fifteen years than they have in the last fifteen. Which changes are most significant for us as an organization? How can we continue to play a vital role in education about Asia? How can we best serve our members? We hope to organize a number of stimulating panels that will address issues like these that help us define our work for the next fifteen years.

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The program of the 2007 Annual ASIANetwork Conference in Lisle, Illinois, will be organized and directed by Professor Donald H. Clark of Trinity University. Don is a Korea specialist who teaches courses on the history of Korea, China, and Japan, and American foreign relations. The textbook he co-authored with Conrad Shirokauer, *Modern East Asia*, was published in 2004. He has published books on the history of Seoul, on the 1980 uprising in Kwangju, and on Christianity in Korea. He is also the Director of International Studies at Trinity. We are very fortunate that he is now serving as Vice-Chair of the Board and is the Chair-designate of the Board for 2007-08. At the April 2006 Board meeting, we decided that beginning with the 2007 conference, the Vice-Chair will take primary responsibility for the program at the annual conference. This will allow the Board Chair to concentrate on other Board activities and issues and distribute the workload more evenly among the Board leadership.

One of the major concerns to which I will be devoting my time and energy during 2006-07 is strategic planning for ASIANetwork. In addition to the issues that have already been mentioned here, the Board is very concerned about continuing to strengthen ASIANetwork's solid financial base and sustaining its leadership as the size of its membership increases and projects multiply. This effort is critical if we are to continue to meet our members' needs. At the April 2006 Board meeting, we decided to form a Strategic Planning Committee charged with developing and implementing a strategic planning process that will result in a statement of priorities and goals for the organization for the long term. This statement will be used as a guide for Board decisions about leadership, finances, projects and other

matters, and will be revisited regularly by this committee to propose revisions to the Board as they become necessary. I will chair this committee; the other members are Teddy Amoloza, Richard Bohr (past Chair), Don Clark (incoming Chair), Erin

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McCarthy (Board member), Mary-Ann Milford-Lutzker (Board member), and Paul Watt (representing the Development Committee).

I am grateful that Richard Bohr, past Chair, has been willing to give generously of his time this summer to help me get the strategic planning process started. Drawing on his extensive experience as the executive director of the Midwest China Center, he has shared crucial advice and contacts. We hope to secure funding that will allow us to use the services of a consultant in developing our strategic plan.

The formation of the Strategic Planning Committee resulted from a process of planning that was initiated at the Fall 2005 Board meeting. The Board asked me, then Vice-Chair, to begin a series of conversations with various constituencies within ASIANetwork regarding concerns and future directions for the organization, and to report back at the April 2006 Board meeting. The first meeting was an informal gathering that

took place in conjunction with the Freeman Asia Symposium in Honolulu on November 30, 2005. Six current and past Board members were able to attend. The second meeting took place when the ASIANetwork Executive Committee convened with the Council of Advisors during the AAS Conference in San Francisco on April 7, 2006. The third meeting, led by past Chair Joan O'Mara, was held the following day, bringing together the ASIANetwork Executive Committee and the newly formed PCAC (Past Chairs Advisory Council). A much longer meeting with PCAC took place before the annual ASIANetwork Conference on April 20, 2006, in Lisle, Illinois. Notes from all these meetings are available on the ASIANetwork web site, as well as a memo from Marianna McJimsey, who was not able to attend any of the meetings. Based on my report of the results of these meetings, the Board decided to form the Strategic Planning Committee. We expect that strategic planning will be an ongoing, regular activity of the Board, not a one-time event.

A second new committee that was also established by Board action at its April 2006 meeting, the Future Faculty Development Projects Committee, is described by Teddy Amoloza in her report in this issue of *The Exchange*.

It is a privilege to work with our Executive Director Teddy Amoloza, with the ASIANetwork Board, and with all our advisory groups. All have given generously of themselves and their best energies to this organization. No wonder it is such an inspiring and creative group of people to work with. No wonder that Asian Studies is flourishing at so many liberal arts colleges today. But like any vibrant organization, we are not satisfied. We want to accomplish more, and I am confident we will, together. ●

**CORRECTION—Editor's note:** *In the Spring issue, the following paragraph was inadvertently omitted from the end of Richard Bohr's article, "New Challenges for Asian Studies." The paragraph outlines the last of three concerns Bohr, as 2005 Chair of the ASIANetwork Board, would like the Past Chairs Advisory Council to consider. Our apologies for the oversight.*

3) *Broadening Asian Studies to encompass the geopolitical and economic dimensions of the Asian Century.* As America's largest trade and investment partner, the "Far East" is now America's "Near West." To prepare our students to build bridges across the Pacific lake, ASIANetwork schools need to emphasize the importance of experiential education to a greater degree. Beyond expanding traditional programs of study and travel in Asia, we need to create service learning, teaching, internship, and other career-building opportunities in Asia and Asian America. The liberal arts lie at the heart of a humanistic orientation toward Asian Studies but its advocates must increasingly work in tandem with professors and practitioners of economics, management, and international relations to prepare qualified "Asia Hands" for the twenty-first century.