

# *College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University Announces Grant*

## **CREATING AN ASIAN STUDIES LEARNING COMMUNITY**

**David P. Bennetts, Professor of History and Chair, Department of History  
P. Richard Bohr, Associate Professor of History and Director of Asian Studies**

The many-sided efforts of the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University (CSB/SJU) to prepare its students for Asia has deep roots. In the 1930s, our monastics pioneered co-educational higher education in China, Buddhist-Christian dialogue, and the planting of Benedictine communities in Asia. Long-time Artist-in-Residence Richard Bresnahan links Japanese pottery techniques with Upper Midwestern materials. For the past eleven summers, Dave Bennetts' ESL/Cultural Studies Program has brought more than a thousand Japanese students and teachers to CSB/SJU. Our Asian Studies Program, created in 1995, oversees the Asian Studies Minor, supports the time-honored student exchanges with Tokyo's Sophia University and Southwest China Normal University near Chongqing, locates teaching opportunities for our graduates in Asia, encourages the activities of the Asia Club, and hosts cultural events.

CSB/SJU's growing interest in Asia reflects our institutional commitment to multiculturalism and the Benedictine "calling forth of new knowledge for the betterment of humankind and the promotion of new understanding of the cultural differences within human civilization." To date, however, our Asia activities have been segmented, the right hand often not knowing what the left is doing. For some time, we have recognized the need for a more integrated approach to education and preparation regarding the growing demands and opportunities of the Pacific Century.

Last spring, we applied to the Bush Foundation and received a \$55,000.00 grant to consolidate our existing strengths and to build, during the next two years, a cohesive Asian Studies Learning Community dedicated to liberal arts education, integration, career training, faculty development, and communications. The authors will direct the project.

**Connecting CSB/SJU to Asia** The Bush grant will enable us to invite internationally-known Asia specialists from various circles for a three-day residency in the fall to educate students, faculty, staff, and monastics about opportunities in Asia. Each spring, we will invite a local authority to address issues of concern to the rapidly-growing,

diverse Asian-Minnesota community (now numbering 140,000 people) and suggest ways CSB/SJU and its students can better serve this fast-growing community.

**Building a Campus Community** CSB/SJU students and faculty have returned to campus from Asia informed and excited but bereft of an organized way to share this enthusiasm. We will therefore convene a campus-wide forum each February on "What Asia taught me about myself and my culture." Our intent is to view multiculturalism through a lively lens, enhance student interest in Asia, boost membership in the campus Asia Club, and help faculty gain new pedagogical insights. In addition, each April, these "Asia Hands" will brief the next group about to embark for Japan or China.

**Internships and Career Exploration** Asia is Minnesota's largest trading partner, involving thousands of Minnesota entities. To unleash the career potential this offers our students, we will organize an annual forum to bring together the campus and Asia-involved alumnae/i with the business, professional, and other communities to explore career opportunities and to develop and expand networking, internship, and training programs.

**Faculty Development in Asian Studies** Eleven CSB/SJU faculty members teach twenty-four Asia-related courses in the Minor program. This fall, a Hindu-Buddhism specialist will join our Theology Department. And five other professors offer an additional thirteen core and departmental courses with significant Asia content. The Bush grant will expand faculty development and curricular offerings even further by financing activities such as summer projects and travel to the ASIANetwork and other conferences.

**Communication and Dissemination** We have endeavored to gather our diverse stakeholders through a popular "Friends of Asian Studies" banquet and performance held annually. But as campus activities have proliferated, it has become clear that we need to find additional ways to coordinate the Asia-related interest groups locally, regionally,

nationally, and in Asia. To this end, the Learning Community will create a central calendar, database, mailing list, newsletter, and website. We are hopeful that this will keep people better informed and make a true community of our disparate parts.

**Asian Studies Advisory Board** Finally, our efforts will be guided by an Asian Studies Advisory Board made up of representatives from on and off campus. The Board will advise the Learning Community co-directors, assist in program review and assessment, and connect us to our stakeholders and the potential funders needed to

institutionalize our pilot project after the Bush grant expires.

In the end, we hope that the Asian Studies Learning Community will help CSB/SJU continue its tradition of cultivating expertise from within and make us a regional center for outreach on Asia and Asian-American culture to secure our place in the newly-dawned Pacific Century.

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## ***ASIANetwork Conference 2000*** ***Lisle, Illinois***

*Throughout the year we will feature the keynote addresses and selected papers from the ASIANetwork Conference 2000.*

**Keynote Address: *Saving the Rain Forest of Ethics: Society, Urgency, and the Study of Asia*** William R. LaFleur, University of Pennsylvania

***Women's Issues in Asia: An Asian Perspective*** Xiaoming Ai, Zhongshan University (UBCHEA at University of the South)

***Teaching About Korea: Strategies, Struggles, and Success Stories*** Linda Lewis, Wittenberg University; Jonathan Wolff, University of Pittsburgh

**Keynote Address: *Saving the Rain Forest of Ethics: Society, Urgency, and the Study of Asia***

**William R. LaFleur**  
**University of Pennsylvania**

I not only express my gratitude to you all for the invitation to take part in your vitally interesting conference but also to those who asked that Christopher Ives be the person to introduce me and my role in it. For decades I have profited immensely not only from his work but also from our mutual discussions on common intellectual interests, ones that are exceptionally close to my own. The pleasure of being with you all has been deepened by this chance to interact once again with him. I feel it also appropriate to mention that the chance to converse here with Henry Rosemont, whom I have only recently met but whose brilliant work I have admired for years, adds greatly to my sheer luck in being invited by you all. I fear that much of what I say here has

been already said by Henry Rosemont with far greater precision and force.

When Suzanne Barnett and Stanley Mickel contacted me to invite my provision of one of the keynote lectures for this meeting of the ASIANetwork, they offered the suggestion that I might do a talk that included some narration of my "personal odyssey" as an Asian Studies scholar and teacher. When preparing this I saw underlined on my notes on that phone conversation the words: "personal odyssey o.k." Perhaps, however, to persons beginning to realize that, given their age, they are now numbered among the "senior" persons in our discipline, any suggestion that they indulge in a bit of autobiographical reflection should be issued only with caution. In truth I had never before been given such carte blanche to be autobiographical and I should probably be worried about the amazing alacrity with which I accepted it. I will—with an unusual degree of pleasure then—accept this opportunity and at the same time promise to try to include here as much intellectual content and as little reminiscential self-indulgence as I can manage. I will assume too that this *as an assignment* will help you tolerate what may otherwise come across as bibliographical narcissism—that is, far more references here to my own