

## *From the Executive Director*



I write this message having just participated with four other colleagues in the selection of participants for the summer 2001 Freeman Foundation sponsored Faculty-Student Fellows Program. The applicant pool was the largest and the strongest ever. We considered twenty-three grant proposals involving ninety-six individuals. Thanks to the generosity of the Freemans, we are providing support for thirteen faculty to direct forty-six student undergraduate research projects, a total of fifty-nine persons. Research groups will work in India (4), Nepal, Thailand (2), Indonesia, China (3), Japan and Mongolia. All groups come from different colleges, and this is the first time faculty and students at Austin College, Belmont University, Elmira College, Lake Forest College, Milliken University, St. Lawrence University, and Viterbo College have received Faculty-Student Fellow awards.

This is a wonderful program, and I would like to spend the remainder of this column discussing its growth and development. The ASIANetwork Faculty-Student Fellows Program is modeled after a program developed at Carleton College which was brought to the attention of the consortium by Eleanor Zelliot, at that time a member of the board. The first group of ten faculty-student teams left for Asia the summer of 1998, followed by ten teams during the summer of 1999 and ten in 2000.

Last April, Stan Mickel, then Board Chair, and I had a brief meeting with Houghton Freeman of the Freeman Foundation in the lobby of the Algonquin Hotel in New York City to talk about the possibility of gaining renewed support from the Freeman Foundation for ASIANetwork summer initiatives. It was a memorable experience.

In a brief forty-five minute meeting, Mr. Freeman expressed continued interest in the Summer Institute program to develop study abroad programs in Asia. He then committed Freeman Foundation support to enable ASIANetwork to run a second cycle of Institutes that will be run during the summer of 2002 for eight and 2003 for seven ASIANetwork colleges. Then he boldly suggested that the Faculty-Student Fellows Program be expanded by encouraging faculty to direct undergraduate research in Asia for greater numbers of students rather than supporting only one-on-one mentoring. When Mr. Freeman asked us how many solid proposals for undergraduate research might be expected based on a formula of faculty taking up to five students to Asia in a given summer, Stan and I responded, "perhaps forty." Mr. Freeman's reply was, "Let's do it; we'll double the size of this program."

As we parted, Mr. Freeman suggested that if the pool of applicants for the summer 2001 program was significantly larger than anticipated we should inform him so that he might consider providing additional support for this initiative. In early January, having received a much greater than expected number of grant requests, I called the Freeman headquarters in Vermont, and in a short phone conversation, Mr. Freeman committed an additional \$126,000 to this program to enable twenty additional participants to join the upcoming program.

As has been the case in past years, information about the grant proposals will be posted on our website at [www.asianetwork.org](http://www.asianetwork.org). I hope you will visit the site and read about them because they say a great deal about the strength of Asian studies programs and the liberal arts at small colleges. Universally these research initiatives are being led by capable and dedicated faculty backed by strong administrative support. The range of research being undertaken is impressive, as are the student researchers, who are both eager and well prepared to undertake their projects.

We encourage you, as faculty at ASIANetwork colleges, to begin the process of collaborating with your students to develop meaningful research projects for next year's program. We are grateful to the Freeman Foundation for its continued support of these initiatives and the consortium, because we believe, as do the Freemans, that travel and research experiences in Asia have a dramatic effect on the lives of participants and their colleges.

*Van Symons*