

## *From the Executive Director*



On the wall of the ASIANetwork office at Augustana College hang four beautifully painted Chinese characters, *jie gu jian jin* ("borrow from the past to scrutinize the present"). The calligraphy was presented to me by a friend, Tu Baixiong, an art student and accomplished artist, who I met over a decade ago while I was on a year's leave to work at the Mansfield Center of The University of Montana. As I view this calligraphy, my thoughts frequently drift back to Tu and Missoula, but at the same time, these characters also remind me of the importance of maintaining an historical perspective.

This past spring ASIANetwork celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. As part of the celebration, former board and council of advisor members met on the Friday afternoon before the spring conference to borrow from our past and consider our future. Marianna McJimsey has written a summary of that discussion which is included in this issue of the newsletter.

I believe it is safe to say that many in this group expressed surprise at the phenomenal growth of ASIANetwork since a consensus was reached a decade ago that a national consortium, sustained by small colleges to strengthen the development of Asian studies on our campuses, should be created.

All agree that what has been achieved has been accomplished because a significant number of individuals have committed themselves with great enthusiasm to work on the board of directors; help organize and sustain our annual conferences; produce three issues of our newsletter each year; develop and sustain our web site; monitor our limited financial resources and develop a successful strategy to strengthen them; generate ideas, write up grant proposals, and then find foundation support for these grant initiatives;

and finally administer summer grants or participate in them. The dedication of colleagues to ASIANetwork initiatives has been truly impressive.

Also central to ASIANetwork's success has been the beneficence of the Freeman, Ford, and Luce Foundations. Those of us who have worked on grant proposals the past few years have become increasingly aware of how fortunate the consortium has been in securing funding for our outreach programs. Frankly, it can be incredibly hard to obtain foundation support, and this is especially true for an organization like ASIANetwork that has no full-time development officers. Nonetheless, we have been able to secure grant support on three occasions from the Henry Luce Foundation to provide consultancies to strengthen Asian studies programs at colleges, to publish a critical book on the importance of Asian studies in the undergraduate liberal arts curriculum, and to develop a web site, produce our newsletter, and sustain our annual conferences. The Freeman family has also shown a keen interest in the consortium and during the last five years supported undergraduate research in Asia for over 170 students and faculty from small colleges and also a program to introduce faculty and administrators from colleges to ways to develop in-house study abroad programs for undergraduates in Asia. (Note: Some notable successes of this program are discussed in an article written by Norm Moline, program director, in this issue of the newsletter.)

Those of us who have had the pleasure of working with Terry Lautz and Helena Kolenda at the Luce Foundation and with the Freemans and their foundation have been immensely impressed by their graciousness and by the interest they have shown in our young organization. One cannot underestimate the impact they have had on the development of ASIANetwork.

Simply put, ASIANetwork has worked these past ten years because the immense commitment of time and effort provided pro bono by numerous individuals to sustain ASIANetwork programs and initiatives has been complemented by the financial resources of the Luce, Freeman, and Ford Foundations.

As we move into our second decade, we have reason to celebrate our initial successes and high hopes that ASIANetwork will be able to continue in its remarkable way to strengthen the understanding of Asia in North America.

*Van Symons*