

belonging, of being a part of something larger than ourselves. If the Confucian vision still seems blurred, perhaps it is due to the Western lenses through which we attempt to see it, as free autonomous individuals, individuals who are strongly inclined to agree with Aldous Huxley that, “We live together, we act on, and react to, one another; but always and in all circumstances we are by ourselves. The martyrs go hand in hand into the arena; they are crucified alone.”

Everyone with eyes to see is aware of the manifold problems attendant on an altogether individualistic conception of the self, but we do not yet take those problems as seriously as we should, evidenced clearly by the fact that barren notions of freedom and autonomy remain foundational for virtually all contemporary, social, moral, and political theorizing. Ever since the Enlightenment at least, individualism has been deeply rooted in Western culture and philosophy, especially in the U.S., and in my opinion is significantly responsible for much of the malaise increasingly infecting it.

A final comment. It may strike some of you as paradoxical that while I have been championing a non-Western philosophical tradition, I have not invoked any arguments for relativism in the attempt. Thus the thrust of the paper appears universalistic, despite the cogent critiques of some postmodernists that universalism in the history of Western philosophy has too often been totalizing, confining, and oppressive. But these critiques, I believe, while largely correct, are directed at the wrong target. There is nothing wrong with seeking universalist values; indeed, that search must go forward if we are to see an end to the ethnic, racial, religious, and sexual violence that have so thoroughly splattered the pages of human history with blood and gore since the Enlightenment. Rather does the wrongness lie in the belief that we, or any single culture, are already fully in possession of those values, and therefore feel justified, backed by superior economic and military threats, in foisting those values on everyone else.

Classical Confucianism proffers an alternative vision, which all people of good will might endorse, and it is on this basis that I commend the careful study of their texts to your attention.

Asia Beyond the Classroom: The Asian Studies Learning Community at the College of St. Benedict and St. John's University

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The Asian Studies Learning Community (ASLC) is one of five learning communities at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University (CSB/SJU) funded by the St. Paul-based Bush Foundation. With its focus on integrative, collaborative, and interdisciplinary community-based education, the learning community concept has been the ideal vehicle for enabling Asian Studies to better support CSB/SJU's commitment to the liberal arts and multiculturalism and to prepare our students to become “Asia Hands” in the newly-dawned Pacific Century.¹

The ASLC presupposes that Asian Studies serves the liberal arts through, in Suzanne Barnett's and Van Symons' words, “the growing awareness of the value of integrating coordinated courses on Asian life and thought into college curricula as a basis for enabling students to understand, and contribute to, an increasingly mobile world of diverse societies and cultures.”² It also supports two pillars of CSB/SJU's institutional mission: one, the dedication to a “coherent liberal arts curriculum” that enables our coordinate colleges to “excel in the study of the intersection of global cultures and community sustainability, leavened by the commitments of the Catholic intellectual life.” And, two, our resolve to help students become “shapers and leaders of the next generation... [of] a rapidly-changing world, one filled with new opportunities

but fraught with unprecedented challenges.”³

Specifically, we hoped the learning community model would enable the Asian Studies Program (created in 1995) to better coordinate and build upon CSB/SJU's existing Asia-related strengths: the Benedictines' religious and educational networks throughout East Asia, Artist-in-Residence Richard Bresnahan's celebrated union of Japanese ceramic techniques, and Upper Midwest Clay, David Bennetts' summer ESL camps for Japanese high school students, student and faculty exchanges in Japan and China; an active Asia Club, and an expanding Asian Studies curriculum.

To this end, the ASLC received \$55,000 for the years 2000-02 to 1) provide expertise, materials, forums, and programs to identify and integrate the growing number of learning partners and enhance student, faculty, and staff development; 2) empower participants to create new alliances across disciplines, administrative areas, and cultures; 3) increase student and alumnae/i involvement in Asia-related service learning and volunteer opportunities, internships, and career preparation; 4) enhance print, technological, and personal networks to connect Asia-related interest groups on campus, across Minnesota, and in Asia; and 5) collaborate with other resources in central Minnesota to serve our Asian neighbors at home and abroad. A “learning community team” representing the interests of students, faculty, staff, our monastic communities, academic advising, the arts, ESL, and study

abroad programs guided the following activities.

Building a Campus Community. We began our efforts by inventorying Asia-related communities on campus. One such group includes students, faculty, and monastics who, after returning from study abroad semesters in Japan and China, had not found a ready audience for the stories they want to tell. So during the winter of 2001 and 2002, the ASLC organized a campus-wide forum entitled *The Asia I Expected; The Asia I Discovered*, at which these enthusiastic “Asia Hands” dialogued with Asian Studies majors and minors, former ESL camp counselors, alumnae/i who had taught in Asia, and Asian, Asian-American, and other students (including those in the upcoming fall semesters’ study abroad cohorts), faculty, and staff on ways to prepare for and improve the exchange experience; to explore issues of identity, relationships with Asian peers, and reentry into American society; and to suggest pedagogical and cultural concerns to help faculty and staff become more effective teachers and study abroad directors.

These forums turned up returned students willing to serve as classroom resources, heightened campus interest in studying and teaching in Asia, recruited new Asia Club members, and identified (from the evaluation forms which were filled out at every ASLC event) a spectrum of Asia-interested people whom we entered into our database, described below.

Community-building was expanded even further last winter when five visitors from Zhanjiang Normal College at the tip of South China participated in the second iteration of this event. The CSB/SJU-Zhanjiang relationship had begun in 1998, when two CSB/SJU graduates taught English there. In the fall of 2000, two Zhanjiang faculty, Professors Deng and Shang, came to CSB/SJU as visiting scholars (and later published a book in Chinese on their impressions of Minnesota). At the same time, Kevin Clancy, a newly-graduated Asian Studies minor/Communications major who had studied in China, went to teach at Zhanjiang. With vision and initiative, Kevin created an intercultural communications course through a telecommunications link between his Zhanjiang class and an intercultural course at CSB/SJU. Not content with mere virtual relationships, Kevin worked with the ASLC to enable four Zhanjiang students and Professor Deng to visit their “culture buddies” in Minnesota for three weeks last January-February. The Chinese lived with host families and in campus dorms, gave power-point presentations on China and Sino-American relations, performed at the Asia Club’s annual Asian New Year celebration, and visited a wide array of Minnesota people and places. After returning to China, they discussed their Minnesota odyssey in a number of venues. As a result of this exchange, Zhanjiang and CSB/SJU administrators have just concluded an agreement that will see further visits by Zhanjiang groups to our campuses and CSB/SJU students and faculty doing a “May Term” at Zhanjiang beginning next spring.

Connecting CSB/SJU to the Pacific Century. As the Zhanjiang-CSB/SJU connection demonstrates, preparing our students for Asia means systematically extending the community circle beyond the classroom and campus to include Asians themselves. To help us envision ways to systematically accomplish this objective, we invited two well-known experts, Lee Pao Xiong, President and CEO of The Urban Coalition of the Twin Cities and former member of President Clinton’s Advisory Commission on Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders, and Bruce Corrie, a native of India and economics professor at Concordia University, Saint Paul—to each give a two-day campus “residency,” Xiong last fall and Corrie last spring. They delivered keynote addresses to packed auditoriums, interacted with a variety of students in and outside the classroom, conducted faculty and staff workshops, and joined other leaders from Minnesota’s governmental, civic, educational, arts, non-profit, and business communities in panel discussions to make three agenda-building recommendations.

First, CSB/SJU should enrich Asian Studies and enhance diversity by including more students from the rapidly-growing Asian-Minnesota community, which now numbers 141,000—up from 98,000 in 1990 and projected to climb to 230,000 by the year 2025. (In fact, Minnesota now has the largest population of Hmong and the second largest group of Tibetan refugees living in America today.) CSB/SJU should recruit these students by developing relationships with their families and community leaders, and it should retain them by providing ESL, mentoring, and other campus resources, involving them in the Asia Club, and developing new courses on the Asian-American experience.

Second, CSB/SJU should broaden efforts to prepare these and other students to serve the growing Asian-Minnesota community—in such areas as economic development, teaching (one-third of Saint Paul public school students are native Hmong speakers), nursing, and social services. We are taking this admonition seriously. CSB/SJU’s recent hiring of Dr. Fungchatou Lo to teach social work is a major step toward this end. Professor Lo and Dr. Dia Cha, a Hmong anthropologist at neighboring St. Cloud State University (with which CSB/SJU cooperates in Asian Studies), have begun developing a joint Hmong Culture Center to provide outreach to the fifteen percent of Asian refugees living in central Minnesota and to focus on issues of concern to Asian-Minnesota women. (Currently, Drs. Lo and Cha are two of only ten Hmong professors in the United States.) Last winter, several of our students supported the successful election campaign of Minnesota State Senator Mee Moua, the first Hmong legislator in American history. In addition, CSB/SJU has begun to cooperate with such entities as the State Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans (which includes forty Asian ethnic groups) and the monthly Pan-Asian Policy Roundtable to provide student and faculty research opportunities regarding Asian-American public policy concerns.

Third, CSB/SJU should widen its career bridges to Asia (in part, through its expanded connections with Asian-

Minnesota). Ever since the railroad pioneer James J. Hill sought to build a trans-Pacific trading empire linking the American Midwest with China and Japan by rail and ship a century ago and in the wake of Minnesota-based Northwest Orient Airlines' polar link to Asia, the region has been a prime focus of Minnesota's international business.⁴ With its well-diversified economy spanning agriculture, high technology, telecommunications, and financial services, export-dependent Minnesota is currently America's eighth-largest exporting state. Now Minnesota's largest trading partner, Asia receives one-third of those exports and last year alone invested \$1.6 billion in wholly-owned subsidiaries in our state, employing 5,600 Minnesotans. The latest data also show that 5,435 firms owned by Asian-Minnesotans earned \$1.7 billion in sales and receipts and created 15,921 Asian-Minnesota jobs.⁵

All the experts involved in the two residencies agreed that CSB/SJU has a golden opportunity to supply "Asia Hands" which Minnesota and America need to create and manage their Asia relationships. This observation was validated last May when Governor Jesse Ventura invited two of our graduating seniors who had studied in China (and who will be teaching and doing research in the PRC and Taiwan next year) to make presentations at a briefing session in St. Paul's Vietnam Center to prepare him to lead the Minnesota trade mission to China the following month.

Internships and Career Preparation. Because learning communities seek to unite academic study with the "real world," the ASLC has naturally been focused on internships and career training. In the spring of 2001 and 2002, the ASLC organized panel presentations called *Working with Asia: An Internship and Careers Forum*. Between both events—one off campus and one on—representatives of a dozen professions affirmed the liberal arts as the ideal way to help students become curious about Asia, learn Asian languages, get grounded in intercultural communication, and prepare for life-altering global experiences. They suggested that students combine this liberal arts perspective with technical skills and such pre-professional courses as education, communication, accounting, management, and international business to prepare for careers in and with Asia.

They also recommended that CSB/SJU complement its curricular strengths in East Asia by introducing stand-alone courses on South and Southeast Asia, collaborate with other Minnesota colleges in organizing a "Semester in Asia" program to introduce our students to other Asian countries such as India, Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam, and cooperate with Asian universities to develop joint degree programs and internships in Asia—beyond the Minnesota-based internships we have already secured through Asia-involved companies, the Minnesota Trade Office, the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Twin Cities Public Television, Minnesota Public Radio, and the *St. Cloud Times*.

In addition, they singled out teaching in Asia as a key career-building step. Recent years have, in fact, seen us

sending increasing numbers of graduates to teach in China and Japan as a way to fulfill service and volunteer aspirations, to extend the immersion experience beyond study abroad, to gain linguistic and cultural skills, and to consider a variety of Asia careers.

Recently, CSB/SJU has been able to broaden teaching opportunities in Japan beyond the JET Program and place graduates in Tokyo's Bunkyo Gakuin University as well as high schools in Okinawa. (Because of the Okinawa connection, there will be more Japanese students coming to our ESL summer camps, Saint John's Preparatory School, and nearby Cathedral High School.) Next year, seven CSB/SJU graduates will be teaching in Japan. The numbers are increasing for China as well. Because of its recent entry into the World Trade Organization, the PRC has mandated that 25% of college instruction must be in English, making China the world's largest English-speaking country. This policy will broaden opportunities for CSB/SJU graduates to serve as English-language instructors in Chinese teachers colleges through the Maryknoll China Service Program and other agencies in China. To date, some fifty of our alumnae/i have done so.

As a result of the growing campus interest in teaching in Asia, the ASLC has implemented a single application process through which our students can be considered for ESL assignments in Japan, China, and—next year—Thailand. In May of 2001 and 2002, the ASLC organized ESL orientation sessions to prepare these future teachers for their further ESL training prior to taking up their teaching assignments.

Faculty Development in Asian Studies. The Asian Studies curriculum is sustained by twelve faculty from ten departments with significant Asia expertise. They teach twenty-one courses with exclusive Asia content. In order to expand our curriculum, we rely—like many of our ASIANetwork colleagues—on developing existing faculty who are new to Asia. As a consequence of a study tour of East Asia during the summer of 1997, for example, five CSB/SJU professors outside the Asian Studies curriculum gained enough expertise to insert Asia components into 13 courses.⁶ Moreover, during the past two years, the ASLC awarded curriculum development grants to nine faculty in eight departments to improve existing courses or develop new ones (on traditional Chinese medicine, Sino-American relations, Hindu mathematics, and Asian-American politics) and to introduce Asia- and Asian-America-related components into economics, biology, environmental studies, intercultural communication, and health care courses. By the 2003-04 academic year, seventeen professors with recently-acquired specialties in Asia and Asian-America will offer a total of thirty-one courses with significant Asia content.

Communication and Dissemination. As our Asia-related activities multiplied in recent years, it has become increasingly evident that we need to find ways to better coordinate information and dialogue locally, regionally,

nationally, and internationally among an increasing number and variety of stakeholders. During the past two years, the ASLC has hired talented students to compile the profiles of ASLC participants and other on- and off-campus partners into a database and mailing list. They have also created an Asian Studies website featuring the print, audio, video, and other products of our ASLC activities as well as links to a host of Asia-related websites, including those of ASIANetwork member institutions.⁷ In addition, we have showcased our activities in the Minnesota-based *Korean Quarterly*, *Asian American Press*, Twin Cities Public Television, and Minnesota Public Radio.

The ASLC and the Future of Asian Studies at CSB/SJU. When we applied for our ASLC grant, we were encouraged to develop a learning community which would be both “transformative” (as opposed to “additive”) and “sustainable.” We believe the ASLC has indeed begun to transform our Asian Studies Program. ASLC evaluations reveal a high degree of participant satisfaction with our ability to identify and integrate the growing number of stakeholders and with our community’s enhanced understanding of ways to maximize our opportunities and challenges in the Pacific Century.

This transforming and sustaining process will, in fact, be strengthened by the implementation of the following “goals of distinction” mandated in CSB/SJU’s coordinate strategic plan for the years 2002-07: 1) expanding CSB/SJU’s commitment to international and domestic off-campus study programs; 2) broadening programs to offer all students significant immersion in another world culture or “subculture” of the American experience; 3) increasing the cultural, geographical, and ethnic diversity of students, faculty, and staff; and 4) creating multicultural programs and activities to improve retention and completion among students of color and international students.⁸

In order to institutionalize the ASLC under the umbrella of the Asian Studies Program, we plan to make the transition from grant to institutional funding. To this end, we have applied for three years of bridge funding from the Bush Foundation while we begin collaborating with on- and off-campus entities in order to continue the activities outlined above. For example, the most obvious campus partners include the offices of Academic Advising, Admission, Alumnae/i Affairs, Career Services, Fine Arts Programming, Institutional Advancement, Internships, International Education, Service Learning, and Student Affairs as well as the Diversity Commission and faculty development grant programs. Outside institutions and resources, including the Asia-Pacific Economic Development Fund, have also indicated an interest in helping us. By anchoring the Asian Studies Program in this way, Asian Studies will have a permanent home at CSB/SJU and will be afforded the best opportunity to help our campuses and our region achieve their Pacific destiny.

¹For CSB/SJU’s learning community guidelines, see www.csbsju.edu/extending. For a summary of the ASLC grant proposal, see David P. Bennetts and P. Richard Bohr, “Creating an Asian Studies Learning Community,” *ASIANetwork Exchange*, 8:1 (Fall 2000), pp. 10-11.

²Suzanne Wilson Barnett and Van Jay Symons, eds., *Asia in the Undergraduate Classroom: A Case for Asian Studies in Liberal Arts Curriculum*. Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, (2000), p. xi.

³CSB/SJU Coordinate Strategic Plan, approved by the CSB Board of Trustees and SJU Board of Regents, May 4, 2001.

⁴For a history of Minnesota-Asia relations through the late 1980s, see P. Richard Bohr, “The Midwest China Center and Our Pacific Agenda,” *Hamline Journal of Public Law and Policy*, 8.1 (1987), pp. 15-45. For the 1990’s, see Robert J. White, “Minnesota and the World Abroad,” in the “Minnesota: A Different America?” issue of *Daedalus*, 129.3 (Summer 2000), pp. 307-334.

⁵See Lee Pao Xiong, “Preparing Higher Education for Asian-Minnesotans,” Keynote Address at the CSB/SJU Fall Residency on “Higher Education and Asian-Minnesota: Developing a Bridge Building Agenda,” November 14, 2001 and Bruce P. Corrie, “Higher Education’s Role in Building Economic Bridges to Asia,” Keynote Address at the CSB/SJU Spring Residency on “Preparing CSB/SJU Students for the Pacific Century: The Economic Nexus,” April 10, 2002.

⁶P. Richard Bohr, “Cultivation from Within: Expanding Asian Studies at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John’s University,” *ASIANetwork Exchange*, 6.3 (February 1999), pp. 1-4.

⁷See www.csbsju.edu/asianstudy.

⁸See note 3 above.



Summer CSB/SJU ESL Camp Graduates from Japan