



**Joan H. O'Mara**  
**East Asian Studies Program Director**  
**Washington and Lee University**  
**Board Chair, 2004-2005**

I've just returned from the last of three consecutive weekend meetings at the Hickory Ridge Conference Center, with members of the Executive Committee and Project Directors for three different programs that ASIANetwork will be running in the year to come. In addition to hours spent in consideration of the applications for these programs, we have also been conferring about the upcoming AN-ASDP conference and several other initiatives that ASIANetwork is embarking upon in the near future.

These weekends, however taxing, have proved enjoyable and productive, in the time they have allowed us to work toward implementing the consortium's programs, many of which have made a difference in the lives of faculty and students, and their institutions. Now, in reflecting about the state of the consortium at this particular point in our history, I cannot help but be impressed not only by the "can-do" attitudes of the people I've been working with, but by the tremendous energy and commitment they bring to the tasks before them.

This is an organization where the efforts of such individuals make a difference. There is something about that "can-do" spirit that, I think, underlies our commitments to teaching careers at four-year liberal arts institutions, places where there is perhaps less tendency to focus narrowly and greater willingness to reach across disciplines, for the sake of an area studies program.

In the several years since I joined the Board, the pot that has been quietly simmering seems to be coming to a boil. Programs have been conceived and carried out; a few have run their course or, in the case of the program to bring ASIANetwork external evaluators to campuses to assess Asian Studies programs there, the grant money has run out but the program has taken on new life as a self-sustaining program. One of the early programs, the *Student-Faculty Fellows Program*, has been funded for another round by the Freeman Foundation. Two new grants—the arts consultancy program and an exchange program for Vietnamese and U.S. faculty members—have been sought and funded by the Henry

Luce Foundation and are currently in the planning stages. A faculty development program in the Pearl River Delta area of China has been jointly conceived with the Hong Kong-America Center, and yet more new ideas crowd the horizon.

Our finances are in order for the present and (we hope) the near future due to the implementation of a carefully considered policy for promoting the responsible growth of our investments.

Memberships are up, with old members renewing and new members joining as full or associate members, as people hear about and want to be considered for one or more of the programs that ASIANetwork is running.

We have now achieved a critical mass, with a track record of responsible administration of grant initiatives and programs that bodes well for the future, as we are poised for a stage of further growth and development.

There is a growing awareness, both among "insiders" and "outsiders," that the consortium has matured and has earned a seat at the table, that ASIANetwork individual members are ready and willing to take on responsibilities and carry them out expeditiously. As an organization, ASIANetwork has a voice that is taken seriously by AAS, by *Education about Asia*, the American Council of Learned Societies, ASDP (with whom we will be meeting jointly at the April conference), and the Hong Kong-America Center.

I don't want to close without expressing appreciation for the unstinting efforts of the Development officers, and, finally, our gratitude to the foundations, whose generosity has been the leavening agent for so much of this enterprise. Thanks to all who have played a role in the history of ASIANetwork, as we prepare for the next steps in the growth of the consortium.