

receive it, since “soft” money is infinitely better than none! This support from Luce allowed ASIANetwork to bank other funds that would have normally been spent on operating expenses, thus increasing the consortium’s savings, and also created a secure climate for the Development Committee’s subsequent work, during which time it has been quite successful.

Finally, one of the most rewarding experiences during my tenure as vice-chair and chair was the chance to sit on the committee reading the applications for the Freeman Faculty-Student Fellowships. Many of the proposals were a joy to read, and the committee’s lively discussions were an added intellectual delight. These

proposals not only showed the breadth of ASIANetwork faculty interests—and some of the most interesting ones were from fields and regions far removed from my own—but they also showed the care that these faculty invested in their students. This opportunity to give students personalized attention and mentoring is one of the unique features of teaching at small college, and one of the things I treasure in my own work.

More than anything, my experiences as an ASIANetwork board member and board chair have reinforced my faith in the value of small colleges, and in the importance of the work that we do there to foster more effective teaching, learning, mentoring, and living.



Joel R. Smith
Skidmore College
Department of Philosophy and Religion
Board Chair 2001-2002

Chairing the ASIANetwork board in 2001-02 was among the most challenging, rewarding, and exhausting work I’ve ever done. Working with so many stimulating colleagues from varied disciplines and diverse colleges was certainly the highlight for me. I thoroughly enjoyed the close working relationship with Van Symons, my fellow board members, and our small but fine staff, as well as meeting new and old colleagues at our conferences.

During our 10th anniversary year, 2002, we celebrated at the April conference at Hickory Ridge Conference Center near Chicago. Conference highlights included keynote talks by Susan Napier on “Inside the Labyrinth: Anime Visions of Technology, Modernity, and Apocalypse” and by Henry Rosemont, Jr. on “Confucian Perspectives on Freedom, Human Rights and Justice.” Putting the conference together is an enormous undertaking by the chair—always with Van’s help, of course—and the late cancellation of a keynote speaker due to illness certainly put me in crisis mode until Henry Rosemont generously stepped in to deliver his superb keynote address. Many of the past members of the board, as well as some members of our council of advisors, joined the current board members in a special Friday afternoon session to reflect upon the past and future of ASIANetwork. Some of their ideas were

shared at a Saturday morning plenary panel, “10th Anniversary Reflections.” The sixteen breakout panels addressed the usual wide range of interdisciplinary topics, and an evening *pipa* recital charmed us all with Chinese music. Sunday morning we rounded out our anniversary reflections with a plenary panel on “The Future of Asian Studies.”

Although I had some good administrative experience when I became chair, the administrative work for the board was new and always seemed to involve re-inventing ourselves even as we built on our past success. The Henry Luce Foundation had recently awarded ASIANetwork a generous grant of \$300,000 over a five-year period to sustain a variety of activities relating to program development. The Freeman Foundation had recently renewed its initial million dollar grant for the Student Faculty Fellows Program and the College in Asia Summer Institute. Much of the fun on the board involved brainstorming about new projects, nurturing some of them into a viable focus, procuring funding for them, and inviting faculty to implement them for our members.

More mundane activities included sustaining and increasing our membership, re-structuring the board’s committee system to make it more effective, and exploring ways to give ASIANetwork a firm financial basis. We also established committees to begin the search for a new director

upon Van's departure and to review the role and functions of the director's position itself. Setting the agenda for and chairing board meetings was living on the edge, as we all know too well when we try to guide faculty to efficiently stay on task so we can accomplish a full agenda.

Exhausting? Yes. I remember dozing off after the conference in the Hickory Ridge lobby waiting for my limo

to the airport. Challenging? Yes. The board chair performs such varied tasks, many of which are far different from our usual academic duties. Rewarding? You bet. Never have I had so much interaction with colleagues from other disciplines. Would I do it again? Maybe in a later life. But it was sure a heck of a joy ride this time around.



James B. Leavell
Herring Professor of Asian Studies
Departments of Asian Studies, History, and Art
Furman University
Board Chair 2002-2003

Van Symons has been both a friend and mentor since I began service on the ASIANetwork board in 2000. Over the years I have been particularly impressed by the manner in which Van, as Executive Director, has identified particular talents of various people and has provided the opportunities for those talents to be used for our collective good. But, he does not just notice our special gifts. He is also listening constantly to our individual passions and considering ways such energy can be channeled for ASIANetwork's benefit. I have long harbored the belief that Van encouraged my nomination for board service because he learned of my interest in website design. He knew I was not actually very web savvy but was eager to learn. I have always been grateful for that special encouragement. Fortunately for all of us, Diane Clayton ultimately brought the ASIANetwork website to genuine functionality, but I had great fun tinkering with the early look. Thank you, Van.

To me, Van's skill in the area of conflict resolution has been inspiring. On a number of occasions I have watched him bring disparate and intensely held positions toward a consensus. Van's ability to negotiate with a broad spectrum of highly placed individuals in funding agencies, museums, and various academic institutions has brought credit to ASIANetwork and our wide variety of projects.

Two particular events during the last five years have served to deepen my admiration for Van. The first of these was his guidance as we planned the 2003 ASIANetwork annual conference in Greenville, SC. His ever-evolving set of meticulous task lists kept me focused during discussions with

hotel managers as well as conference panel participants. I marveled at his ability to adjust when carefully laid plans dissolved due to unforeseen developments. At all times he was gracious, but firm in protecting the interests of our organization.

The second event was Van's service as an ASIANetwork consultant on my own campus. He basically ran a workshop for me on how consultants should perform. He moved smoothly at all levels of the faculty and administration, listening carefully and translating what he heard into suggestions that quickly began to lift our Furman program to new levels.

It seems appropriate to mention that Van has been joined in his service to ASIANetwork by an extraordinary group of Augustana College colleagues—Norm Moline, Marsha Smith, Nirmala Salgado and of course, Ruth Symons. What a team!

Van's extraordinary contributions to ASIANetwork will leave a legacy upon which we will continue to build. He has left big shoes to fill. Fortunately for us, Teddy Amoloza has impressively large feet.