

# Vietnam-ASIANetwork Faculty Exchange

Paul Nietupski  
John Carroll University

In yet another expression of generous and considered support, the Henry Luce Foundation has provided funds for academic exchanges between Vietnamese and ASIANetwork schools for 2005-2006 and 2006-2007. The program was originally proposed by Minh Kauffman, Director of the Center for Educational Exchange with Vietnam, a member of the American Council of Learned Societies. ASIANetwork was brought on board to provide appropriate host institutions in the United States and to promote long term academic relationships between Vietnamese and U.S. institutions. Sandra Bradley of ACLS is in charge of managing the grant monies and legal details.

The enthusiasm for this program is an indicator of both Vietnam's emergence as a progressive new player in East Asia and of U.S. interest in the country. Even in the current fast-moving Asian environment, Vietnam is arguably one of the most dynamic countries in the region. Its physical location makes it special. The striking natural beauty of its nearly 3500 kilometer coastline and its rugged highlands are the setting for its rich ethnographic and biological diversity. Its 1400 kilometer border with China and its Lao and Cambodian frontiers are filters for intercultural exchange, assimilation and conflict with South, Southeast and East Asia. The country is nonetheless distinctively Vietnamese, with a persistent culture, a long prehistory and a complex web of native civilizations that rose and fell over very many centuries, tested most recently by events since the 1950s. Perhaps the most remarkable fact is that through many turbulent centuries the Vietnamese have survived. In the past twenty-five years Vietnam has overcome tragedies and ongoing obstacles, and has emerged as a modern and forward-looking country, strong, creative and as resilient as ever. It is poised to be an Asian economic powerhouse, it boasts vibrant and distinctively Vietnamese arts and literary communities, and above all it seeks to engage the world.

Since the 1995 normalization of relations between the USA and Vietnam, and U.S. President Bill Clinton's landmark speech at Hanoi University in 2000, the United States has become Vietnam's largest trading partner and provider of key structures for educational development in the country. In the face of massive development issues, Vietnam's commitment to education has been a top priority. Vietnam's rapprochement with the United States is significant in itself; in the words of many young Vietnamese, "Vietnam is looking to the future, not to the past." The present faculty exchange program plays a central role in this process, each year placing four Vietnamese scholars of the social sciences

[I]n the words of many young Vietnamese, "Vietnam is looking to the future, not to the past." The present faculty exchange program plays a central role in this process...[c]onversely, our ASIANetwork schools will send four scholars to Vietnam in each year of the program to study, do research, and most of all to lay the basis for lasting relationships....

and humanities in four ASIANetwork schools, sharing our curricula, our visions, our problems and solutions. Conversely, our ASIANetwork schools will send four scholars to Vietnam in each year of the program to study, do research, and most of all to lay the basis for lasting relationships, a stated objective of the program. CEEVN's experience and familiarity in Vietnam, ACLS' administrative expertise and ASIANetwork's hands-on understanding of teaching and research work together to build a solid foundation for the program.

In the first year, four Vietnamese scholars from the College of Social Sciences and Humanities in Ho Chi Minh City and in Hanoi were selected from a large pool of candidates. The selection of Vietnamese candidates was no small task. The ASIANetwork/ACLS/CEEVN

team was charged to identify qualified faculty with strong English skills in academic specialties poised for growth in their home schools, who could easily interface with ASIANetwork counterparts, and who were above all able to be granted leaves of absence. On the U.S. side, a national competition was put in place through the ASIANetwork consortium. Schools with established links to Vietnam and schools with commitment to develop Vietnam studies applied for the awards; selecting the best host schools was also no small task. In the end, four Vietnamese scholars were placed in four U.S. schools, and those four schools have substantially strengthened their Vietnam curricula.

## Pham Quang Minh-Pomona College

The four Vietnamese scholars are as diverse as their ASIANetwork hosts. Prof. Pham Quang Minh is, among many other things, Deputy Dean of the Department of International Studies in the College of Social Sciences and Humanities in Hanoi. Prof. Minh is very articulate in English, and speaks fluent Russian and German. He earned a Bachelor's degree in Russia and a Master's in Germany. His current research interests are in U.S. teaching methods, college resource



Pham Quang Minh

(continued on next page)

development and international relations; he has published extensively in his fields in Vietnamese, German, and English. Above all, Pham Quang Minh is an active and engaging individual; his enthusiasm for his work is contagious. After careful consideration, the ASIANetwork/ACLS/CEEVN placed Prof. Minh at Pomona College in Claremont, California. Pomona has a long history of Asian studies, and is part of the Consortium of Claremont Colleges. Several Pomona faculty will work with Prof. Minh, including one of the leading U.S. scholars of Vietnam, Prof. David Elliot. Prof. Elliot brings many decades of research and landmark publications to Pomona, and will serve as an excellent colleague for Prof. Minh.

### **Nguyen Quy Thanh-University of Puget Sound**

Nguyen Quy Thanh teaches in the Department of Sociology



*Nguyen Quy Thanh*

at the College of Social Sciences and Humanities in Hanoi. His English is excellent, and he is fluent in Russian. He has academic degrees from Russian and Vietnamese universities, and has taught in South Korea and lectured in Hawai'i and Russia. Prof. Thanh's main research interest is in the sociology of healthcare and healthcare development. He is a remarkably prolific author, to date the author or co-author of ten books and some twenty-six articles in his field. He is an active scholar on many fronts, and will be a credit to his ASIANetwork hosts at the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Washington. The greater Puget Sound region holds excellent resources for Prof. Thanh, including a vibrant Vietnamese community and a dynamic group of scholars at the University of Puget Sound. Prof. Karl Fields and no fewer than fourteen UPS colleagues will engage Prof. Thanh with an impressive array of relevant courses and a well-articulated agenda for the visitor. The UPS team is excellent; their qualifications are outstanding in many relevant fields. The group has expressed a keen interest in Vietnam, and the scholars in all disciplines will make good use of this opportunity to develop a Vietnam curriculum.

### **Tran Thi Phuong Phuong-Hobart and William Smith College**

Tran Thi Phuong Phuong is the Director of International Relations and Research Affairs at the College of Social Sciences and Humanities in Ho Chi Minh City. Her academic and teaching specialties are in Vietnamese, Russian and comparative literatures. Her English language skills are excellent, and she has academic degrees from Vietnamese and Russian universities. Prof. Phuong was a Fellow at Harvard University for two years and is an active lecturer and author. She is an accomplished teacher, and has had considerable experience teaching foreign students. Her current research is in ancient and medieval Vietnamese literature and in teaching methodologies. Her literary interests and notably her interest in pedagogy make her an excellent choice for a post in

an ASIANetwork school. Hobart and William Smith College in Geneva, New York, is located in western New York's Finger Lakes region, certainly an ideal location for any foreign visitor, and, given its outstanding foundation in Vietnamese studies, an excellent choice for this program. HWS has a long history of Asian studies and an extensive Asian language library collection; as such, the college is in an ideal location for a scholar of literature. In addition,



HWS makes good use of its Asian *Tran Thi Phuong Phuong* resources in its extensive Asian studies curriculum. This ASIANetwork host offers foundation courses in Vietnam, and it developed exchange programs even before the 1995 normalization of relations between the USA and Vietnam. In 2001, Hobart and William Smith was a co-recipient of a major U.S. Department of Education grant designed specifically to expand Vietnam studies. Since receiving the grant HWS has been committed to developing Vietnam-related courses, exchange programs, guest lecture programs, Vietnamese film and music programming, regional community education projects and a host of Vietnam-related activities. The ASIANetwork grant—and notably Prof. Phuong, a specialist in languages, literature and international studies—will surely move the HWS Vietnam program forward. One of the key scholars at HWS is Prof. Jack Harris, whose broad interests and achievements include numerous Vietnam development initiatives, as well as publication and research projects. His involvement with the regional community will also give their Vietnamese guest a terrific opportunity to engage American society. The HWS effort will surely be successful.

### **Lam Thi My Dzung-Marlboro College**

The fourth ASIANetwork guest from Vietnam is Lam Thi My Dzung, scheduled to come to Marlboro College in Fall, 2006. Prof. Dzung's qualifications are as impressive as her colleagues' but her background is notable for its depth and diversity. She is an expert in many fields, and brings experience from them all. Her academic degrees were granted in Bulgaria in History and Archeology, and she now teaches history and archeology in Hanoi, at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities. Her publication record is outstanding, with four books to her credit and ten articles published and co-published from 2002-2004. She is also the Director of the Museum of Anthropology in Hanoi and is a highly regarded field researcher. While her academic specialties are history, archeology and anthropology, Prof. Dzung will bring expertise in curriculum development and gender studies to Marlboro College in Marlboro, Vermont. Her ability to address such diverse fields so thoroughly and clearly impressed the team. Above all, Prof. Dzung is a teacher, and when asked, her stated objective if selected to be a guest of ASIANetwork was simply to engage U.S. students. She is indeed a natural teacher, and she will fit the Marlboro community well.

Marlboro is a small school in the stunning Green Mountains of Vermont, not far from a number of other colleges and universities, with which it has close contacts and exchanges—another factor which will serve this initiative well. The faculty-student ratio is very small, and Marlboro students enjoy a high degree of autonomy and flexibility. The culture of the school allows for interdisciplinary contact and interaction between students and teachers, a perfect place for a natural teacher and scholar like Prof. Dzung. Nearly half of Marlboro students study abroad, and recently many have studied in Vietnam. Marlboro's curriculum includes courses on Vietnam, and the school has hosted a Vietnamese film festival, sponsored a number of lectures on Vietnam, and encouraged student and faculty research in Vietnam. Prof. Seth Harter is the team leader, and has done extensive field research in Vietnam. Katrin Jellema and other colleagues contribute significantly to the effort to develop Vietnamese studies at Marlboro, whose program is more extensive

than many at much larger colleges and universities. Among the Marlboro faculty are scholars who bring fluent Vietnamese language skills, knowledge of Vietnamese literature, study of Vietnamese sociology and ethnography, knowledge of Southeast Asian biology and expertise in the region's flora and fauna, and appreciation of Vietnamese art. This is a dynamic environment.

And these initiatives reflect only the first year of the ASIANetwork Vietnam Faculty Exchange Program! It too is dynamic, and has required hard work and commitment on the part of the entire ASIANetwork Committee: Sandra Bradley at ACLS and Minh Kaufman at CEEVN. It goes without saying that this initiative would be impossible without the vision, generosity and commitment of the Henry Luce Foundation. The second year of the program is upon us. We all look forward to working together to enhance our understanding and contact with Vietnam and to using this pilot program as a foundation for development of Vietnamese studies in the ASIANetwork consortium.

---

**From the Executive Director** (continued from page 4)

I joined their meeting on Saturday evening to discuss the new timeline and budget allocation as a consequence of the one-year extension that we worked out with the Luce Foundation. Again, I was very impressed with the level of care and foresight of the members of the group. A budget re-allocation was carefully considered and thoroughly discussed, and the timetable that was approved, although tight toward the end, is feasible. (Subsequently, both the budget re-allocation and timeline were sent to the Luce Foundation and were approved.) Stan Mickel, the Project Administrator, is doing a yeoman job coordinating the many facets of this complicated project. Although retiring in a year, he will see to the completion of this project, that will result in the publication of the first book in our book series project.

As you can see, the level of activity at ASIANetwork goes up several notches during the first part of the spring semester when we spend considerable amount of time reading applications

and selecting participants for the different programs we run. Of these funded programs, only two will continue beyond the current cycles; the Asian Art in the Undergraduate Curriculum project, which will continue through the spring of 2009, and the Student-Faculty Fellow program funded by the Freeman Foundation, which still has one year left in this funding cycle (we are hopeful that we will again receive funding to continue this program when we apply for renewal).

The variety of the programs we operate is illustrative of the opportunities that ASIANetwork offers, and the success of these programs depends to a large extent on the interest and support of the membership. We welcome ideas for new programs and we encourage faculty colleagues at our member schools to share with us their visions and dreams for the consortium. By working together, we will ensure the continuing relevance and pivotal role of ASIANetwork, as we forge ahead in our mission to promote the study of Asia at small liberal arts institutions.

---

**From the Board Chair** (continued from page 5)

1) *Enhancing College Language Instruction.* Asia is now the world's economic epicenter. Increasingly, American policy-makers realize that preparing U.S. students for the global economy begins with teaching them Asian languages. The White House-endorsed National Security Language Initiative seeks to expand Asian and Middle East language instruction to keep America globally competitive and secure. And the U.S.-China Cultural Engagement Act, now moving through the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, proposes to spend \$1.3 billion over five years to make American kids proficient in Chinese (the world's most widely spoken language) by the fourth grade. Moreover, the Boston, Chicago, Houston, and Philadelphia public schools, along with a number of U.S. states, are cooperating with China's Ministry of Education to immerse American students in Chinese language and culture. These initiatives will multiply the 25,000

high school students currently taking Chinese in thirty U.S. states. But are ASIANetwork member schools—most of which offer nothing beyond second-year Japanese and Chinese—prepared to provide advanced language courses by the time these students enter college?

2) *Expanding the Geographical Scope of "Asian Studies."* East Asia has been the well-funded cornerstone of America's Asian Studies syllabus for the past century and a half. But the recent economic surge of India and its potential integration with China—many economists call this phenomenon "Chindia"—puts the spotlight on the need to develop a South Asian (along with Islamic) Studies component of Asian Studies. Few ASIANetwork schools have historic ties to South Asia, and there is little foundation support for South Asian Studies at present. However, for America to succeed in relating to the new Asia, we must now make this area a major priority.