

NETWORK NEWS

From the Executive Director

You Spoke, We Listened: ASIANetwork's Action in Response to Survey Results

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In the Spring 2007 issue of the *ASIANetwork Exchange*, I briefly summarized the results of the two surveys we conducted last year. In the institutional survey, 59 schools were represented (about one-third of our member schools). In the individual member survey, 180 individuals from 109 institutions responded (less than one-fifth of individual members). Respondents to the surveys were self-selected, but despite the lack of representativeness of this sample, we took the responses seriously because we know that those who took the time to respond are all actively engaged with ASIANetwork and look to the consortium for support in their professional and programmatic development. Thus, at the Board meeting last September, the Strategic Planning Committee recommended several courses of action in response to the results from both surveys.

Asian Language Courses: Of the 55 schools that responded to the question about language programs, 43 offer Chinese and 36 offer Japanese; of these schools, 25 offer third year Chinese and 22 offer third year Japanese; these numbers drop down to 12 and 15 respectively in the fourth year. Of these schools, 10 offer a major in Chinese and 10 offer a major in Japanese. (Interestingly, Asian languages other than Chinese and Japanese are offered by some schools, namely, Pilipino, Hindi, Punjabi, Sanskrit and Tibetan.)

It became apparent to us that there is a need to initiate and sustain language programs at member schools. Given the fiscal constraints that all our schools face,

we need to think collectively about strategies to meet our needs. To this effect, Phyllis Larson is organizing a roundtable discussion on "Teaching Asian Languages in Liberal Arts Colleges" at the Saturday breakfast at the conference in San Antonio in March. We also want to call our members' attention to the ASIANetwork Consultancy Program that the past board chair (now Phyllis Larson) coordinates. This consultancy program is a service to

At the conference in San Antonio a roundtable discussion, "Teaching Asian Languages in Liberal Arts Colleges," will focus on how to initiate and sustain Asian language programs at member schools.

member institutions that seek outside advice on ways to strengthen the study of Asia on their campuses, including Asian languages. Our pool of consultants includes colleagues in established Asian language programs at liberal arts colleges. Details about this program are on the website and we encourage our member schools to take advantage of this opportunity.

Conference Program: Among the 180 individuals who responded to the question about the preferred type of panels at the conference, an overwhelming majority, nearly 90%, said that they would likely or most likely attend panels on scholarly or research topics. Also, 91% said that they would likely or most likely attend panels that discuss current issues about Asia. In response to this survey result, the 2008 Conference Program Committee chaired by Board Vice-chair Erin McCarthy has put together a

conference program that includes a number of scholarly panels. There is at least one such panel at every concurrent panel session. In addition, we are working on bringing a speaker at the Saturday lunch ("Hot Topic Lunch") to talk about current issues in Pakistan. We still have a fair number of panels that focus on pedagogy in keeping with our mission to facilitate conversation on the teaching of Asia and to foster collaboration among our

members. Future conferences will continue to offer a balanced mix of scholarly and pedagogical panels as well as provide venue for keeping in-tune with current topics in Asia.

Professional Development Opportunities: Members expressed the need to have more opportunities to go to Asia. Currently, our only program that offers such opportunity is the Freeman-funded

Student-Faculty Fellows program that supports teams of students and their faculty mentor to conduct research in East and Southeast Asia. It is quite obvious that we need to expand the geographic coverage for such opportunity and to offer more support for faculty development. The Future Projects Committee is working on two such possibilities, and the Development Committee is actively searching for other sources of funding. It is premature to discuss any details of these two initiatives, but rest assured that we are continually exploring other possibilities to send faculty to Asia. One strategy may be to identify foundations that support specific academic activities and to explore if they will support such activity in an Asian setting.

ASIANetwork communication media: A decided majority of the individual respondents rated each of our communication medium, the website, e-

(continued on page 31)

You Spoke, We Listened (continued from page 8)

mail, and newsletter as very helpful sources of information about our programs and operations. Communication is an important part of networking, and to provide effective means of communicating with our members and between our members, we are aware that we need to continually polish the various media through which we communicate. We hope you have noted our new **website** that Bob Eng, Publicity and Website Committee Chair, very painstakingly redesigned. It is now easier to navigate and allows for easier access to news, programs and services. In addition to posting program announcements on the web, we continue to include flyers with the conference packet and in the Fall mailing. This year, we again sent out the mailing for the upcoming conference instead of relying on the web announcement solely.

We use our **e-mail** list-serv very judiciously so that members will deem that messages coming from ASIANetwork contain important information and should

not be deleted outright. This is a moderated list-serv; hence, sending a reply to this list-serv will not get posted unless such message is authorized by the moderators. We have deleted the e-mail addresses of our members from our membership list on the web in order to avoid any robot program that harvests e-mail addresses from accessing members' e-mail addresses.

More members also expressed preference for hard copy of this **newsletter** (only 16% of the respondents prefer it in electronic form in a members-only site) and we will continue to do so. But the newsletter will only be effective as a tool for communication and dialogue if we hear from you. Thus, we need input from the membership. In the first issue of the newsletter under the current co-editorship, we inaugurated several sections: Teach-

We hope you have noted our newly redesigned website. It allows for easier access to news, programs and services.

ing about Asia, Media Resources, Research of Note, and For our Students. We encourage you to submit essays for each of these sections and to send us feedback. We have been anticipating an issue with a "Letters to the Editors" section, but again, this will only happen if we hear from you. Please let us know what you think of the newsletter.

The actions we have taken may not be giant steps, but we think these steps nonetheless mark important advances at this point in the consortium's development. The ASIANetwork Board will continue to work diligently on each goal listed in our strategic plan. We look forward to expanding our work with you and achieving these shared goals!

Welcome to ASIANetwork!

We are very pleased to welcome the following institutions that joined our consortium this year. We look forward to their continuing participation in the years ahead.

Full Members:

- Canisius College**
- Coastal Carolina University**
- Linfield College**
- Reed College**
- Washington and Jefferson College**

Associate Members:

- Eastern Illinois University**
- University of Central Florida**
- University of New Hampshire**
- Villanova University**

We also recognize the following individuals who chose to continue their association with ASIANetwork by joining as Affiliate Individuals:

- Suzanne Wilson Barnett**
- Mark Sheldon**
- Dawn Yonally**

In November while traveling in China with students and colleagues from Augustana College, Van Symons, ASIANetwork Executive Director, 1999-2005, suffered a heart attack. He was flown home to the United States and is now recovering from bypass surgery.

ASIANetwork wishes
Van
a smooth and speedy recovery!