

# *ASIANetwork Initiatives*

## **ASIANetwork Freeman Student-Faculty Fellowship Program Renewed**

Dear ASIANetwork Members,

As Chair of the Board of Directors of ASIANetwork I am pleased to report that the Freeman Foundation has renewed for a third time their support for the ASIANetwork Student-Faculty Fellows Program. This grant of \$1,251,524 is payable over three years; it will provide support over three summers for approximately twelve faculty mentors from ASIANetwork member institutions to take from one to five students (sixty persons total) to East and Southeast Asia to conduct undergraduate research during 2005, 2006, and 2007.

Teddy Amoloza, who has served as Student-Faculty Fellows Program Director for the past six years, has written the essay in this newsletter about the program to provide an overview of it and discuss its significance.

A formal announcement of the program, with particulars on how to apply to participate in it, is also included in this newsletter. Complete details about the program are available at our website, [www.asianetwork.org](http://www.asianetwork.org), or by mailing Teddy Amoloza at Illinois Wesleyan University.

We are immensely grateful to Houghton and Doreen Freeman and the Freeman Foundation for the continued support of ASIANetwork.

Sincerely,

Paul Watt  
Chair, Board of Directors  
ASIANetwork

## **ASIANetwork Freeman Student-Faculty Fellows Program: A Retrospective**

**Teodora O. Amoloza, Program Director  
Illinois Wesleyan University**

### **History of the Program**

In October 1996, in the sunlit boardroom of the Hickory Ridge Conference Center in Lisle, IL, members of the ASIANetwork Board of Directors were brainstorming about what kinds of projects to propose to the Freeman Foundation. We had learned earlier in the year of the Foundation's strong interest in supporting studies in and about Asia, thanks in large part to two of our "founding fathers," Tom Benson, former president of Green Mountain College in Poultney, Vermont, and David Vikner, former president of the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia, who facilitated the initial encounters between ASIANetwork and Mr. Houghton Freeman. We eventually decided on a proposal with two program components: the College-in-Asia program where member institutions would learn how to establish term programs in Asia modeled after Augustana College's program, and the Student-Faculty Fellows program, a one-on-one faculty-student mentorship that was loosely modeled after Carlton College's program described by Eleanor Zelliot. I still remember turning to Van Symons, who was very quietly nudging me, to take a lead role in this program. Not knowing what I was getting into, I agreed, and thus began my deep involvement with this program from its inception.

We embarked on probably the first collaborative electronic grant writing in ASIANetwork's history (that was fall 1996 and we were all not well-versed with e-mail yet). This new endeavor involved Tim Cheek and Marianna McJimsey at Colorado College, Van Symons and Norm Moline at Augustana College, Madeline Chu at Kalamazoo College, and myself at Illinois Wesleyan University. On January 7, 1997, we learned from Marianna of her astonishment upon opening her mail to find a check for \$260,000 from the Freeman Foundation and a letter informing ASIANetwork that the Freeman Foundation had funded the proposal to the tune of \$1 million for the next four years. What a truly amazing experience for all of us! At the AAS conference in Chicago that spring, we met to discuss details of implementing the program. Because there was inadequate time to generate a strong pool of faculty and student

participants before the summer of 1997, the first Student-Faculty Fellows were not selected until the following year for study in Asia beginning the summer of 1998. During the first three-year cycle of the fellowship program, ten faculty fellows were selected each year to work with a single student on his/her undergraduate research project. Consequently, during the summers of 1998, 1999, and 2000, thirty faculty mentors led thirty students to Asia.

In April 2000, Van Symons and Stan Mickel met with Mr. Freeman in the lobby of the Algonquin Hotel in New York City to discuss the possibility of the Freeman Foundation funding a second cycle of the Student-Faculty Fellows and College-in-Asia Programs. At this meeting, Mr. Freeman suggested that faculty be encouraged to mentor more than a single student when traveling to Asia. It was agreed that mentors would be encouraged to take up to five students to Asia to support their undergraduate research activities. Mr. Freeman's suggestion has had a most favorable impact on the program.

Not knowing exactly what the response would be to expanding the program in such a fashion, a grant renewal proposal was submitted to the Freeman Foundation in May 2000 based on the assumption that ten teams consisting of a total of forty individuals would be funded. However, at the meeting in NYC, Mr. Freeman suggested that if the first pool of applicants was especially strong, the foundation might support sending additional fellows. During this second cycle of funding, the applicant pool has averaged well over 100 individuals each year, and the quality of the applications has also improved quite dramatically. Consequently, in what has become an annual phone conversation between Van Symons and Mr. Freeman, an agreement has been reached each year to support sixty individuals during the summers of 2001, 2002, and 2003. Limiting the number of participants to sixty has insured that the quality of proposals remains very high. In late Fall 2002, we sent in a request for support to run a third cycle of the Student-Faculty Fellows Program based on the new formula of granting 60 fellowships. This would occur during the summers of 2004, 2005, and 2006. But because of the SARS epidemic in Asia in 2003, which resulted in the postponement of all ASIANetwork administered travels to Asia until 2004, the Freeman Foundation decided to consider the proposal for funding starting in summer 2005. In early January of this year, we again received the wonderful news that the Freeman Foundation has committed to support a third cycle of this program that will run through the summer of 2007.

### Program Implementation

The first two cycles of the Student-Faculty Fellows Program were administered by Madeline Chu as the overall director of the two Freeman-funded ASIANetwork programs and myself as director of this fellowship program. We function under careful board oversight and work closely with the Executive Director. The fellowship opportunities are announced in early spring and summer through a number of channels to colleges throughout the United States.

Applications due by November 30 include a proposal narrative for each project, personal statements from each student and faculty mentor, student transcripts, a curriculum vitae of the faculty mentor, letters of recommendation for each research team member and a letter of commitment and support from the institution's chief academic officer. In early February, the selection committee composed of the Executive Director, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Board of Directors and the two program directors meet to conduct a thorough and impartial review. Faculty leaders of the selected teams are contacted immediately, and after award and acceptance letters are signed, travel funds are released in March. Faculty fellows are required to attend the orientation meeting at the April ASIANetwork conference to help them prepare for their Asian study experience and answer any questions they might have regarding budgetary matters, insurance concerns, and other matters. They and at least one student, if possible, are required to attend the April meeting after their return to make a presentation about their research. Preliminary reports are submitted in mid-September, and final reports are due at the end of May. The final report package includes a financial report verified by the institution's chief financial officer. Faculty stipends are sent only after these reports are received.



Whitman College ASIANetwork Freeman Student-Faculty Fellows in front of a theater in China.

### Research Projects and Asian Destinations

Student research projects have embraced a broad range of disciplines, and almost every Asian country has hosted student researchers. Countries hosting fellows include: China, Hong Kong S.A.R., India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam. The range of research is impressive. For instance, a physics student studied the variations of the "r" sound in the Japanese language, while a chemistry student studied the effects of air pollution on temples in Nepal and India, and a pharmacy student compared traditional Chinese medicine with Western medicine. In the fine arts, a student studied Taohuawu woodblock prints in China, a music student worked with Japanese musicians and performed at a Shinto music festival, and a group of dance students traveled to Szechwan to study Han dynastic dance forms and then performed at several community events and at the ASIANetwork conference in South Carolina in April 2003.

Another group of students studied Chinese opera and presented a western adaptation of *The Peach Blossom Fan* as a fall theater production at their home campus. Among the 2003 recipients, a group of five students plans to follow their mentor to China to reside for two weeks in each of four rural villages to study the impact of modernization on various facets of rural life. Another group plans to travel to Kyoto with their mentor, a Jodo Shinshu priest, to study the Yabunouchi tradition of Tea Ceremony in Japan. This past winter, a group of five students and their mentor traveled to Thailand to study health issues among young children in a rural village. And for the first time, there will be a team in South Korea who will pursue topics focusing on culture and education.

With the guidance of their mentors, students became very creative in adapting their field research strategies to the conditions that presented themselves. I marveled reading about Paul Boruta, playing his guitar and singing Chinese songs to a train car load of Chinese folks, so to establish a rapport with them before interviewing them. I smiled when imagining the women students wearing comfortable *salwar-kamiz* suits while traveling and conducting interviews in India. And I was very impressed with the range of experiences of the research teams: walking with Buddhist nuns in religious processions; interviewing government authorities, writers, medical practitioners, teachers, investors, bankers and ordinary people; videotaping religious and other cultural rituals; exploring the countryside; visiting museums to study cultural artifacts; learning Chinese theater and dances; undertaking ecological investigations, and the list goes on. I was very impressed by the Hamline University researchers' ability to gain a private audience with the president of Taiwan, Chen Shui-bian. And I always felt a great deal of satisfaction every time students wrote about how the experience not only contributed to their further understanding of the societies they studied, but also added to their deeper understanding of their own culture; in learning about others, they learned more about themselves.



A memorable event for years to come: A trip to the president's office: from left to right: April Nigh, Heather Posthumus, Briana Adams, President Chen Shui-bian, Dr. Kagan, Jeff Paffrath, and Robert Peterson.

## Success of the Program

From all qualitative and quantitative indicators, the program has been immensely successful; a broad range of institutions has received program grants to date and institutional interest in the program continues to grow. The quality of mentoring for students and of student research is absolutely remarkable, and as such, these fellowships are having a dramatic effect on student participants and the campus communities from which they come. Excerpts from reports of student and faculty participants are published on ASIANetwork's webpage; they attest to the life-transforming experiences of the students and the faculty mentors as well. The significant impact of the first cycle of this program on the professional and personal lives of the participants is succinctly summarized in an article titled "ASIANetwork Freeman Student-Faculty Fellows Program: An Intense Study Abroad Experience" published in the Spring 2000 issue of the *ASIANetwork Exchange*. Selected research papers from the first cycle were published by Wittenberg University in the volume *ASIANetwork Freeman Student-Faculty Fellows Papers on Asia* as part of the ten-year anniversary of the consortium.

## Institutional Impact

The outreach of the Student-Faculty Fellows Program has been impressive. During the first cycle of the program (1998-2000), thirty pairs of student researchers and faculty mentors from twenty-two different colleges participated. During the summers of 2001 and 2002 (the first two years of the second cycle of the newly-expanded program) another 25 faculty mentors and 92 students undertook undergraduate research projects in Asia. For summer 2003, another group of 12 faculty mentors and 45 students were scheduled to go to Asia, but due to the SARS epidemic they either traveled during this last winter break or will be traveling in summer 2004. By the end of this summer, 234 faculty and students will have traveled to Asia. The outreach of the program continues to expand as evidenced by the last pool of 22 applications coming from research teams at 15 colleges previously not funded. Over the last six years of competition, applications to participate in the program came from 75 different institutions and research teams from 46 different colleges were funded; 10 of the 12 teams that were selected in 2003 came from institutions that had not received funding before.

The program has become an incredibly important venue for faculty and student development at small colleges, which often have few resources to encourage the study of Asia on their campuses. Consequently, this program can be a real blessing to the very small groups of Asian-focused scholars on such campuses. Of the 46 colleges that have received funding from this program, 15 of them have enrollments at or below 1500 students; among them, Hiram College, St. Andrews Presbyterian College, Simon's Rock College of Bard and Warren Wilson College, each enrolling fewer than 1000 students. Other recipient institutions with between 1000 and 1500 students are Austin, Bard, Coe, Eckerd, Elmira, Hartwick, Kalamazoo, Kenyon, Lake Forest, and Whitman colleges and

the University of the South. In many of these institutions there are only one or two Asian scholars and limited resources for studying Asia. Their fellowship grant focuses the attention of students and the broader campus community upon Asia. Over these years administering this program, I have been continually impressed by the dedication and creativity of the faculty mentors who inspire students to discover Asia and who nurture them in their own intellectual journeys. I also continue to be impressed by the students whose candor and enthusiasm are manifest in their reports. These research teams reflect the best of the liberal arts tradition.

#### *Impact on Student Fellows*

The trip to Asia played a significant role in the academic and professional career choices of a number of fellows; in some cases opportunities were opened to them because of this experience. A number of them pursued further study of Asia after their bachelor's degrees. *Jan Brunson* of Eckerd College and a 1998 fellow went to graduate school at Brown University. Her masters' thesis focusing on women's strategies and contraceptive choices in Nepal was similar to her fellowship research conducted in Sri Lanka. Currently, she is back in Nepal on a Fulbright fellowship exploring larger issues affecting reproductive choices for her doctoral dissertation at Brown University. *Karen Stoll*, a 1998 fellow from Kalamazoo College who did research in Sri Lanka, is currently pursuing a doctorate degree in South Asian studies at the University of Pennsylvania. *Andy Busch*, from Illinois Wesleyan University who went to India in 1998, is pursuing a master's program at Purdue University in Cultural Studies and has decided to pursue a minor in South Asian history. *Jennifer Lawrence* of Coe College has decided to enter the seminary as a result of her further study of Christianity in India as a student fellow in 1999. *Ryan Murray*, a 2000 fellow from Valparaiso University who conducted his research in China, completed a master's degree in contemporary China Studies at Oxford University. *Erin Cline*, a 2001 fellow from Belmont University who studied in China, is a Presidential Doctoral Scholar in Philosophy at Baylor University in Texas, where she is currently teaching Asian Philosophy. Last year, she was Co-Director of the lecture series "An American Experience with the Dao," which gave her an opportunity to speak at several colleges and a national conference. *Carl Dull*, a 2002 fellow from the University of the South, continues his intellectual discovery of China as a graduate student in philosophy at Southern Illinois University where he is studying Chinese and Chinese philosophy. Most of these former student fellows will be future educators, and I very much cherish the thought that with these young scholars in academic institutions, the study of Asia will surely flourish in the future.



Close to Tibet - in Zhongdian: students from University of the South, including Rory Fraser and Carl Dull, respectively, far right.

Other fellows continued their study of Asia after returning from abroad. Most recently, *Rory Fraser*, a senior at the University of the South who went to China in 2002 is writing his thesis on Zhuangzi and the problem of evil. He is also finishing the documentary film he started in China. A number of them went back to Asia on study abroad programs. *Foster Reif*, a 1999 fellow from the University of Puget Sound who conducted research in Taiwan, studied at the Chinese University of Hong Kong for one year after the fellowship. *Sven Pinczewski* of Lake Forest College who did research in China in 2001, went back to study Chinese language and culture at Peking University. Two students from the John Carroll University team that went to China in 2002 returned to Asia. *Tim Grose* returned for one semester to study in Beijing and continued his study of Chinese language, while *Mike Pratt* spent a semester in Thailand and now writes about Sino-Tibetan topics. And at Whitman College, the production of *The Peach Blossom Fan* had a significant impact on two of the performers. *Julia Brown*, a 2002 fellow, is currently in Beijing studying Kunqu with the teachers she worked with during their research trip. (*Oliver White*, one of the actors in the play who was not part of the research team, decided to double major in Theater and Asian Studies and will be going to China this summer to study Chinese theater.)



Preparing for *The Peach Blossom Fan*, a student from Whitman has traditional Japanese make-up applied.

Two other students were successful in the Fulbright competition, receiving fellowships that took them back to Asia. *Paul Boruta*, a 1998 fellow from St. Olaf College who conducted research in China, went to Taiwan on a Fulbright fellowship after graduation. He later secured a position at Piper Jaffray, a financial investing firm, (where his work gives him the opportunity of frequently returning to Asia.) *Jeffrey Lung* who did his research in China as a 2000 fellow from Kalamazoo College, received a Fulbright fellowship that enabled him to go back to China in 2001.

Quite a few of the fellows opted to start their post-baccalaureate careers by teaching English in Asia. *Andy Shroeder*, a 1999 fellow from Colorado College who did research in Japan and *Katharine Dorn*, a 2002 fellow from Central College who did research in China, both taught English in Japan. *Ryan Murray*, a 2000 fellow from Valparaiso University who conducted his research in China, returned to Hangzhou to teach English after he graduated. Several other 2002 fellows are currently teaching English in China, namely *Rebecca Pond* from Colgate University, *April Nigh* and *Briana Adams* both from Hamline University and *Matthew Wright* from St. Olaf College. *Robert Peterson*, a 2002 fellow whose team went to Taiwan, spent a year in China and is currently in Taiwan teaching English. *Mara Anderson*, another fellow from Colorado College who went to China in 1998, wrote her thesis for her Asian Studies major on Chinese women's contemporary art. She taught English in Taiwan and is now working at the Chinese art section of the Denver Art Museum.

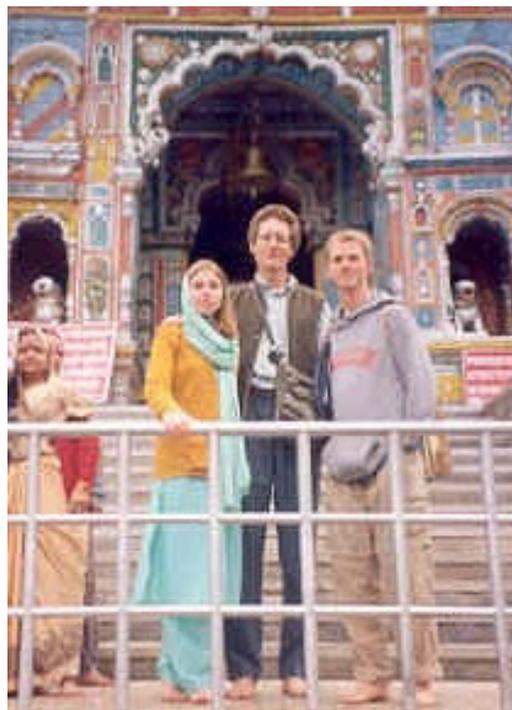


St. Olaf College ASIANetwork Freeman Student-Faculty Fellows at a Shanghai carpet factory. Left to right: Julie Stiehl, Xun Pomponio, Matthew Wright.

Other students pursued different careers that in one way or another benefit from their fellowship experience. *Julie Stiel*, 2002 fellow from St. Olaf College who did research in China, is an intelligence officer in the army analyzing Chinese data. *Ashley Anderson*, a 1998 fellow from Butler University who studied Chinese herbal medicine, returned to China one year later to continue her research and later worked with a U.S. pharmaceutical company that has contacts with Chinese medical practitioners. Although not related to her professional

career, *Amanda (Walker) Vemuri* from Davidson College credits her ease in interacting with her Indian parents-in-law to her experience with Indian culture while conducting ecological research in 1998. She is now a doctoral candidate in Environmental Studies at the University of Maryland.

The last paragraph of the *ASIANetwork Exchange* article that was cited earlier, expressed the hope that "...student fellows who will continue their career in Asian studies will be much more confident when they return to Asia as a result of this fellowship." It also optimistically stated that "(W)e anticipate that the impact of the fellowship will continue to be evident in the academic careers of the student fellows." Knowing what these students did after their return, it is very obvious that their fellowship had a profound impact on their professional as well as their personal lives. For that we are immensely proud of them. We salute the faculty mentors for patiently and expertly guiding their students in negotiating the uncertain terrain of their intellectual journey. And ASIANetwork is deeply grateful to the Freeman Foundation for providing the opportunity for students from our member colleges to deepen their theoretical knowledge of Asia with actual exploration and discovery on site that ultimately enriched their own lives. It is our fervent hope that we will be able to provide such opportunities for many more students at small liberal arts institutions for many more years to come.



Carthage College ASIANetwork Freeman Student-Faculty Fellows at Badrinath Temple.