

Global Partners Project **Collaboration on the study of and in East Asia**

The Global Partners Project is an experiment, testing ways to strengthen international education on liberal arts campuses through collaboration. The project has brought together three consortia, representing forty-two colleges, with the support of a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The project has supported faculty development efforts, resources for language teaching, a student program abroad, and programs aimed at disseminating best practices in international education.

The project's regional alliance initiative has addressed a crucial question: In what ways can collaboration strengthen the colleges' engagement with a particular country or region? The project's leaders chose three regions to test the question—France, East Africa, and East Asia. Task forces of faculty from the participating colleges directed the work for each region. Those task forces have discussed colleges' current engagement with the regions and possible collaborative initiatives, but generally have not pursued new initiatives or programs.

The East Asia Regional Alliance task force has met several times and conducted several lines of research over the last few years. It has looked at curricular issues, faculty development, and off-campus study patterns. It has concentrated its attention on China and Japan, while including Korea, Vietnam, and Taiwan in some questions.

The task force has concluded that East Asia is a region of growing interest for the Global Partners colleges, but college engagement varies widely—in part because there are high barriers to engagement. The task force has concluded that collaboration might help overcome those barriers, but there are obstacles to collaboration as well. This paper outlines college interest, current patterns of engagement, and possible collaboration.

A region of growing interest

Without question the Global Partners colleges are increasingly interested in East Asia. They are creating Asian Studies majors, hiring faculty to teach the region's languages and cultures, and organizing off-campus study programs for students. For some colleges this is a long-standing interest, in some cases rooted in the college's history of educating missionaries destined for Asia. Others have gotten a more recent start but have invested a great deal of money and energy in the region, anticipating that an involvement in Asia will attract new students, faculty, and financial support. Yet others are interested but do not have the financial or personnel resources to get started.

A variety of forces seem to drive this interest. Most obviously, Asia—particularly China—is taking an increasingly prominent role in international politics and business, symbolized by the 2008 Olympics in Beijing. Colleges feel that their students need a better knowledge of this important part of the world. Students are also being drawn in by the popular culture coming out of the region, including Hong Kong action films and Japanese anime. Faculty entrepreneurs, a small but committed cohort, are turning their personal and scholarly interests into curricular initiatives and off-campus programs. Foundations and organizations—most notably the Freeman Foundation and ASIANetwork—have provided grants for faculty development and student programs.

Faculty members have a crucial role in developing an Asian presence in the curriculum and on the campus. Faculty with specialized training and experience in Asia want to promote

their field, encourage faculty colleagues, and stimulate student interest. Other faculty develop interests in Asia and with support can create new courses and help to shape a more substantial program.

Assessment of engagement

The task force researched the extent of the Global Partners colleges' engagement with East Asia. It looked at on-campus resources and off-campus programs, and speculated on the barriers to further engagement.

On-campus study: The Global Partners colleges have structured their teaching of Asian Studies in a variety of ways. Of the forty-two colleges:

- 10 have a major in Asian Studies (or East Asia, or Chinese, or Japanese Studies)
- 16 offer an East Asia concentration as part of an International Studies major
- 17 offer a minor in Asia Studies (or East Asia, or Chinese, or Japanese Studies)
- 3 offer a major in Japanese language, and 8 offer a minor
- 5 have a major in Chinese language, and 7 have a minor
- 23 teach Japanese
- 18 teach Chinese
- 260 faculty members are in some way teaching or interested in Asian studies

Off-campus study: Students at the Global Partners colleges take advantage of various opportunities to study in East Asia. In the years 2000-2003, approximately 7% of the Global Partners students studying off-campus went to Asia, a percentage comparable to American college students as a whole.¹ In those years, 28% (or 142 per year) of the students studying in Asia went to Japan, with 25% (127 per year) went to China. Taiwan came in at 1.6% and South Korea at 1.4%. They participated in 94 off-campus programs in the region, run by colleges, consortia, or third-party providers. (The attached data tables list the most-used programs, including breakdowns by program manager and country.) Among the programs used, one was consortial, thirteen were exchanges, twenty-six run by colleges (in some cases, short-term programs), and fifty-four offered by third-party providers.

Barriers to engagement: Clearly the Global Partners colleges offer a variety of ways for faculty and students to engage East Asia. There are a variety of barriers to engagement, however. As is common for liberal arts colleges (or most other educational institutions, for that matter), resources are limited. A few Global Partners colleges have full Asian Studies departments, with dedicated faculty, majors, and language and culture courses. The rest are getting by with a few faculty members who either have added courses to their usual responsibility or are trying to cover the entire field themselves. Other colleges rely on adjuncts. Some project colleges have relied on Freeman Foundation grants to spur program development, but in most cases those grant projects have ended. Colleges with minimal Asian studies programs have found themselves shut out from many grants, sensing that those that already have resources tend to receive more.

Students face two obstacles to studying in the region. First, the languages are demanding. A deep experience of Chinese or Japanese culture requires more language training than many project colleges can provide. Second, off-campus programs in the region are of varying quality, and many are not well suited for liberal arts students. That is particularly the case in China, where local and American entrepreneurs are creating programs.

¹In 2004 Global Partners Project staff surveyed the colleges, collecting numbers around student participation in off-campus programs. The data are not perfect—the survey appears to have missed several colleges—but they give a general impression.

Overcoming barriers through collaboration

Collaboration could help overcome some of these obstacles to engagement with East Asia. The task force has identified several collaborative strategies, and started working on a few. Some of these strategies could be carried out by the colleges or the consortia, while others would require outside funding. There are obstacles to collaboration as well, however.

Collaborative ideas

Faculty development seminars: As mentioned, there is a small but committed group of faculty at Global Partners colleges currently teaching East Asia. It would be good, however, to get other faculty interested in the region as well, integrating Asian cultures and issues throughout the curriculum. Programs modeled after NEH seminars (and the Global Partners seminars in Africa, Central Europe, Russia, and Turkey) would encourage faculty to connect East Asia to their scholarship and teaching, increasing engagement throughout the college.

Develop faculty connections across campuses: Most Global Partners colleges have only one or two East Asianists, resulting in professional isolation. Seminars, workshops, and other events could build connections across campuses and build a critical mass of East Asianists at Global Partners colleges. An electronic mailing list could publicize events and share curricular ideas. A directory (print or online) of faculty could connect people and share resources; a department seeking an outside evaluator could find one at another college, for instance.

Support on-campus program development: There is growing interest in the region and growing desire on the part of colleges to jump on the bandwagon. Inexperienced faculty and administrators don't know where to begin to create an East Asian program. They would benefit from bringing in more experienced faculty from sister institutions, who could serve as consultants on program development.

Share international visitors: Faculty and students both benefit when international visitors—scholars or artists from another culture—come to campus. The investment—in airfare, lodging, etc.—is sometimes substantial, however. The expense would be easier to handle if it were shared among two or more colleges. Colleges could work together to identify potential visitors and schedule visits to multiple campuses, sharing in the planning and the expense.

Speakers' bureau: The Global Partners colleges already have valuable resources right on their campuses. Faculty members have expertise worth sharing with the other colleges. Colleges should be encouraged to bring faculty from sister institutions to speak and teach seminars. A centralized database of faculty people and their interests could help in that process.

Cooperative language teaching: Few of the Global Partners colleges have enough students interested in Japanese or Chinese to make a critical mass for a class, especially at the higher levels. Colleges could jointly teach the languages, perhaps following the model of the ACS "virtual" Classics department.

Collaborative off-campus study program: As mentioned above, there are numerous off-campus programs in the region already, and more are appearing all the time. Not all of them are appropriate for liberal arts students—either academically too lax or too narrowly focused. Some colleges have considered establishing their own programs in the region, but have found that there are high hurdles administratively, and that it takes a large cohort of students to make such a program work. Colleges could collaborate to establish an off-campus program that would integrate well with on-campus curricula, serve their students well, and provide an economy of scale unavailable to single-campus programs.

Buyers' cooperative for off-campus study: Alternately, colleges could collaborate to strike a deal with one of the current program providers in the region. Negotiation could begin after a review of available programs determined which might be most appropriate for liberal arts college students. Such a deal might include a reduced price for students from Global Partners colleges and influence over the curriculum in exchange for an exclusive agreement between the colleges and the program provider. This would save having to start from scratch and would take advantage of the provider's experience and critical mass of students.

Resources for advising students about off-campus study: It has become clear that students have a more successful study abroad experience when they are in the right program, and that proper advising helps make that connection. Colleges could collaborate on materials that would help students find the right off-campus programs in East Asia for their skill level and interests.

Barriers to collaboration

There are clearly a number of ways that colleges could work together to strengthen their teaching of East Asia. Unfortunately, there are several barriers to collaboration, most of them common to any area of collaboration.

- Some East Asia **faculty feel that their deans are not supportive** of their work and are not willing to encourage new initiatives.
- For good reasons, administrators tend to focus their energy on their local needs, giving **collaboration a lower priority**.
- Colleges have **widely varying curricular goals**. Some want to get students into language-focused programs, for instance, while others want students to have rich intercultural experiences. This would make it hard for colleges to agree on one off-campus study program, since different programs have different foci. The tri-consortial network of forty-two colleges might be large enough, however, to support ties with several programs rather than only one.
- **Students also have widely varying goals**. Some want internships, while others want to focus on language training or cultural experience. Again, this would make it hard to choose one off-campus study program.
- Colleges also have **widely varying resources**. For better-endowed colleges, collaboration is not a high priority, since they can afford to pursue goals on their own. Lesser-endowed institutions find that collaboration is often the only way they can get access to programs and resources.
- Consortia support collaborative efforts. **Consortia are unlikely to make East Asia a priority** for collaboration, however, unless their member colleges agree that it should be a priority.

Current collaboration

There are several areas of collaboration already in place regarding East Asia. They could be models or foundations for further work.

- The East Asia task force has drafted a **report on off-campus study options** in China. It describes the five third-party provider programs in China most used by Global Partners colleges; those colleges were asked the strengths and weaknesses of the programs they use, as well as the marks of an ideal program in China. The report concludes by recommending a program that the consortia or colleges could focus on, perhaps as a buyers' cooperative. It is not clear at this point, however, how such a decision could be made and implemented. The report could also be used by people who advise students about off-campus options.
- The task force has also created a **database of on-campus resources** for the study and teaching of East Asia. It includes a list of faculty at each Global Partners college interested in

the region, as well as majors, languages offered, and library and art collections. This database could be used to find speakers or other experts from other colleges, language-teaching options, and for sharing other resources. The Japan Study office at Earlham College will regularly update the database; the task force is not sure, however, about the best way to organize and share the data.

- The **Japan Study Program**, based at Earlham College and recognized by the Associated Colleges of the Midwest and the Great Lakes Colleges Association, is an important resource for Asianists in the consortia. It operates a strong student program at Waseda University, the most-used Japan program by Global Partners students. It also has built a network of faculty; it offers a variety of professional development opportunities to faculty in the two consortia, has an electronic mailing list, and is building a speakers' bureau. At the moment the program's offerings are not regularly available to the Associated Colleges of the South.
- The most important collaborative resource is **ASIANetwork**, which is a consortium of liberal arts colleges across the country. It offers conferences and grant support to both faculty and students, and has developed a long history of expertise in the region. Many of the Global Partners colleges are already members of ASIANetwork; faculty from the consortial colleges are leaders in its work. The task force does not want to duplicate ASIANetwork's valuable work.

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