

UNITED BOARD

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UNITED BOARD FOR CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION IN ASIA



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Message from the President

Our Focus on Whole Person Education

In the first months of 2015, my United Board colleagues and I have interacted with hundreds of representatives of Asian colleges and universities, either through conferences and workshops, campus visits, or hosting guests in our Hong Kong and New York offices. These stimulating discussions remind us of the varied routes our Asian colleagues follow toward a shared goal of preparing students intellectually, socially, and morally for rewarding professional and personal lives.

At the United Board, we embrace this diversity and the ideas it germinates, yet we also seek a framework that grounds teaching and learning in academic rigor, social concerns, and moral inquiry. For that reason, in 2012 we made whole person education a central priority of our work, and today it forms the core of our five program areas (*see diagram on next page*). We can trace its roots to our earliest engagement with Asian educators, as the United Board helped introduce a liberal arts tradition into the 13 Chinese colleges that comprised our original network.



Nancy E. Chapman
President

How can whole person education help colleges and universities capitalize on a unique opportunity to transform young minds? In the classroom, whole person education promotes critical thinking and challenges students to draw their own conclusions. It guides curricula toward exploration of ethics and service as well as knowledge. It replaces an institution's blind pursuit of prestige and rankings with a commitment to developing sound citizens. It directs students' attention beyond the classroom to the needs of the surrounding community. As I recently read in *Inside Higher Education*, whole person education also helps "students define an identity, a direction in life, and a personal philosophy."¹

Whole person education may lack the clear boundaries of a defined academic discipline. But by touching each point of a trinity — intellectual, social, and moral— it enables the United Board and the universities in its network to infuse academic life with new purpose.

¹Stephen Mintz, "Educating the Whole Person," *Inside Higher Education*, October 27, 2014.

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Network News

South Asia Task Force Launched

The United Board has launched a South Asia Task Force to seek ideas on current trends and future prospects in higher education in the region, focusing on the specific challenges facing Christian higher education. These insights will help the task force consider what types of programs the United Board might undertake in India, and possibly other countries in the region, in the next decade. United Board Trustees Judith Berling and Sister Pushpa Joseph serve as co-chairs of the task force, with former Trustee Paul Appasamy and current Trustees Joshua Ka Ho Mok and Father Ben Nebres as members.



United Board Program Areas

The United Board promotes the values and practices of whole person education in the liberal arts tradition, preparing students for fullness of life in their families and communities. Our redefined program areas (see diagram) place whole person education at the core, as this diagram illustrates. Through these programs, the United Board seeks to respond in the most effective, sensitive, and creative ways to the diverse needs and opportunities facing our colleagues in higher education throughout the Asian region.



Learning alongside Neighbors

Tim Chen, Soochow University

“
When students go into the community,
the learning is mutual.”

At first, Tim Chen was disappointed when he learned his second placement as a 2008-2010 United Board Fellow would be at Ateneo de Manila University in the Philippines. He had hoped to spend four months at an Australian university. But Anne Ofstedal, then the United Board's director of fellowship and scholarship programs, told him, “Trust me, you will like Ateneo” — and he did.

“The spirit of education there was inspiring,” he said, and its holistic approach to teaching and learning felt similar to that of Soochow University, his home institution in Taiwan. Ateneo and Soochow emphasize a commitment to service, which infuses the curriculum. “Both schools inspire students to help people wherever there is need,” he said, “and there are many activities and projects on both campuses to help their surrounding communities.”

“When students go into the community,” Dr. Chen said, “the learning is mutual.” Ateneo's partnership with Gawad Kalinga, a community development organization, helps make that kind of learning possible, as it creates opportunities for students and faculty to apply their time

and talents to poverty alleviation. Dr. Chen saw the impact on students. “These service-learning projects enable students to see real life in society and understand the needs of ordinary people,” he said.

Seeing “real life” in Manila opened Dr. Chen's eyes in other ways as well. He was in his 40s when he left Taiwan for his fellowship placement, “but only then did I realize the Philippines is our neighbor.” Soochow University students also are eager to meet their neighbors throughout Asia, and international service-learning opens the door to introductions. Building on the foundation of Soochow's International Volunteer Club — one of the most popular clubs on campus — Dr. Chen has led service-learning trips to the Philippines, partnering with Gawad Kalinga and Ateneo de Manila. “We get to know the country and culture — and our students get fellowship with Ateneo students.”

Soochow's International Volunteer Club also has engaged in service-learning in Cambodia, India, Nepal, and Vietnam. How has Dr. Chen helped Soochow University connect with partners in some of these countries? “I use the United Board Fellows Program as my network to expand service-learning.”



Dr. Tim Chen, Associate
Professor of Political Science,
Soochow University



Dr. Chen with students on a service trip in the Philippines.

A Prophetic, Creative Theology

Sr. Pushpa Joseph

“Public theology is faith seeking dialogue and compassionate relationships.”

Dr. Pushpa Joseph is the Provincial Superior of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, Bangalore, India. She taught in Madras University for nine years and is presently the Director of the Centre for Women's Studies, DVK, Bangalore. She is a United Board Trustee and the co-chair of its South Asia Task Force.

How do you define public theology?

Public theology is any theology that has the concerns of people at its core. It has something to say about the day-to-day struggles of people. It is not merely a theology of consent, but also of resistance, because people can be active agents of change. It analyzes divisions of space, yet it also highlights ways in which liberating powers create new space for marginalized people.

For Christians, theology gives us the tools to interpret Jesus's message. Public theology has at its center the blood, flesh, and life of people. What is the Eucharist if not this?

Is there a role for public theology in Asian societies?

I see three important issues in the Asian context. First, people have been impoverished but they do not live their lives as victims. They have not forgotten the art of sharing; rather, they open their homes and share the little they have. They do not take a victimized approach but instead find newness in life. Second, with a plurality of traditions in Asia, Asians have the capacity to create relationships across faiths and cultures. The third issue is the caste system, especially as it exists in India. Caste-based divisions are communicated subliminally, in traditions, and are passed on through generations. They are presented as natural and even divine, as though this is the way that God has ordained things to be.

Public theology asks questions that critically challenge reinforcing structures that are not liberating, or perpetuate injustice, or refuse to make available the promise of life and the Gospels. It is critical, prophetic, and creative. It calls us to be open to the positive resistance found in everyday practices of marginalized people.



United Board Trustee
Pushpa Joseph

Is there a relationship between higher education and public theology?

In the Indian context, knowledge is not merely a channel to power but a journey to genuine wisdom. And Proverbs tells us that wisdom is like laying a table that is full of bounty and open to all. Yet higher education is becoming more competitive and consumeristic, more expensive and specialized.

Education must make students socially conscious and socially responsible to the masses. If the traditional definition of theology is faith seeking understanding, then the definition of public theology is faith seeking dialogue and compassionate relationships. So in this way, education can become a path to freedom.



Dr. Joseph with a scholar at the United Board's Institute for Advanced Study in Asian Cultures and Theologies.

Learning in Doing

Social Work Education in Northwestern China

“
Social work is a helping
profession which emphasizes
practice.”

Mainland Chinese universities are responding to the government’s call to “build up a strong team of social workers to help in the development of the harmonious society,” by developing bachelor and master of social work degree programs. But this academic discipline is still young in China, and in the western regions of the country, where the need for social workers is especially acute, many social work educators are not actually trained in social work. “Social work is different from other social science disciplines,” Dr. Ku Hok-bun, an associate professor at Hong Kong Polytechnic University, finds. “It is a helping profession which emphasizes practice.”

In social work education, Dr. Ku said, “learning in doing” is the key element. That puts the practicum — supervised field training — at the heart of the curriculum. “My experience tells me that doing practicum is the only effective way for students to internalize social work values and learn practical skills,” he said. But when most of the social work teachers in western China lack practice

experience, he asked, “How can they teach students practice and provide qualified practice supervision?” That gap has inspired Dr. Ku and his colleagues at PolyU to share their expertise with universities in northwestern China. The United Board is supporting Hong Kong Polytechnic University’s initiative in Shaanxi province.



Dr. Ku Hok-bun leads a social work training workshop.

In collaboration with Northwest University and Xi’an Jiaotong University, Dr. Ku and his colleagues have already facilitated two training workshops. “This project provides basic training for social work teachers, letting them know how to teach social work, do social work research, and construct social work practicum sites,” he said. This aligns with the United Board’s mission by emphasizing the link between education and service to communities in need. The focus on teachers is a wise investment, as newly trained faculty members can educate hundreds of students working toward careers in social service.

What are some priority needs? “In rural China, left-behind elderly and children are big issues as middle-aged and young people are leaving villages to work in the cities,” Dr. Ku pointed out. To help meet these needs, project teams of educators and nongovernmental organization staff are constructing practicum sites in two rural Shaanxi villages. Each team will receive ongoing consultancy services from PolyU, as they collect information and materials to develop a teaching and learning package, develop their practicum sites, and prepare for action research.

Making this a reality will require a vibrant community of educators and service providers. “The ultimate goal,” according to PolyU, “is to build a critical mass of social work scholars in rural development and sustainability,” who can train a new generation of social workers and, in turn, improve the lives of vulnerable populations in northwest China.



Workshop participants discuss ways to develop practicum sites.

Inspired to Dream Bigger Dreams

Allan H. Lee

“

I was introduced to
a world beyond Hong Kong and Asia.”



Allan Lee, a member of ICU's Class of 1957.

was only a short distance, but that lunchtime errand and his enrollment in ICU's Class of 1957 marked a turning point in his life.

Dr. Lee already planned to be a teacher, so his four years at ICU did not radically alter his career plans. But ICU's general education classes, in addition to the requirements for his physics major, broadened his perspective. "I was introduced to a world beyond Hong Kong and Asia. I was inspired to venture into new areas of endeavor and dream bigger dreams," he recalls. Dr. Lee went on to earn graduate degrees and spend nearly 25 years on the faculty of Seneca College in Toronto, but he still remembers the impact of individual ICU teachers, administrators, support staff, and students. "These role models — who exuded such old-fashioned values as dedication to work, commitment to service, humility and tolerance in everyday life, caring and compassion for other people — were the single most important source that helped shape and mold my core values."

Allan Lee was attending a teacher training school in 1952 when he learned the United Board was offering full scholarships for Hong Kong students to attend Japan's International Christian University (ICU). The deadline for applications was the next day, so during his lunch break he rushed to nearby Chung Chi College to pick up an application. The trip

The benefits of general education are enduring, Dr. Lee believes, and could be even more important to students of today than yesterday. "Our world is undergoing change as never before. Critical thinking skills and a readiness to pursue lifelong learning will place the recipient of general education at a great advantage, irrespective of the nature and type of his or her work."

Dr. Lee remains deeply grateful to the United Board for his scholarship. "Above all, it was a very generous scholarship, and I didn't come from a well-to-do family," he said. That inspires Dr. Lee's giving to the United Board, which broadens the horizons of Asian educators through its United Board Fellows Program, Faculty Scholarship Program, and other endeavors. As he wrote on the occasion of ICU's sixtieth anniversary, "I am hopeful that with growing support from friends and alumni, the dynamic partnership between ICU and the United Board will flourish and make an even greater positive impact on higher education in East and Southeast Asia in the years to come."



Allan Lee, third from left, with ICU classmates.

Service-Learning in Myanmar

Aye Aye Tun, Dagon University

“
Higher education needs to
become engaged with its
communities.”

Service-learning is a new and untested concept in Myanmar universities, but it could help undergraduate students analyze problems critically, appraise arguments and beliefs, and, most importantly, weigh alternatives, according to Dr. Aye Aye Tun, pro-rector at Dagon University (DU). “The current curriculum is so overloaded with factual information that it leads to rote learning,” she said in a recent interview. “Classroom practices do not allow for analytical, creative thinking or free discussion and expression of thought.”

Myanmar has a unitary system of higher education, with all universities relying on a fixed curriculum and syllabus. That makes it difficult to introduce service-learning or other new courses. But in the current era of reform, DU educators see the need for “higher education to become engaged, through actions and teaching, with its communities.” So Dr. Tun is exploring ways to build a service-learning component into the approved

curriculum. One example is the Research Methodology in Philosophy course (Phil 4104). For this course, students choose a project topic, conduct field work and gather data, and write a paper; with service-learning, they could have the option to meet these requirements by learning while doing service. There may be similar ways to incorporate service-learning into other disciplines.



Aye Aye Tun, Pro-Rector,
Dagon University.

Dr. Tun knows service-learning will appeal to students. When Dagon University said it would offer extracurricular activities in service-learning, more than 500 students applied. “Meanwhile,” Dr. Tun said, “it is essential to set up an intensive training program for educators to know how to introduce a service-learning course, how to practice and implement it, and how to evaluate the outcome of the course.”

The United Board has been helping Dr. Tun and her colleagues develop the human resources needed for service-learning. It supported a three-day service-learning workshop at DU in October 2014 and a follow-up session in February. The United Board included Dr. Tun in the “Learning from Yolanda” international service-learning project in the Philippines last summer. It facilitated an introduction to Silliman University’s service-learning program, which may be a source of ideas for DU.

Dr. Tun believes service-learning can have an impact beyond the campus. “Myanmar universities have educated their students without well equipping them with civic skills, community engagement, and good morals,” she said. “Dagon University takes up the challenge for higher education to re-examine its public purpose and its commitment to the democratic ideal.”



Dagon University teachers participated in a United
Board service-learning training workshop.

Diverse Connectivity

Gui-woo Lee, Seoul Women's University

“
The trans-Asia peace model
has great potential.”

When students at Seoul Women's University (SWU) broaden their perspective from Korean women to Asian women, they encounter new possibilities for understanding globalization and for serving as peacemakers. That idea guided Dr. Gui-woo Lee as she and her colleagues designed the elective course “Women for Trans-Asian Peace,” with the support of a United Board grant. “This course is based on gender perspective,” Dr. Lee said. “However, we made it a peace education course in order to deal with the much wider range of problems and situations that arise from global connectivity across national borders.”

Globalization's impact extends far beyond economic indicators: in Korea, it also is seen in the increase in international marriages and in “global split families,” where one spouse lives and works in another country. With these changes, tensions between countries can become potential sources of family strain or, conversely, episodes of domestic violence in international marriages can disrupt peaceful foreign relations. That creates a role for higher education, Dr. Lee finds. “We think we are in an important position to educate and train people as transnational peace mediators.”



SWU students in India for global service-learning.

Building awareness is a first step. Course lectures and extracurricular discussions focused on topics like changing family dynamics in Asia, the demand for “fast fashion” and its impact on female workers in low-income Asian countries, immigrant wives and women's rights, and tourism. The transnational elements often were new to the students, but over time, Dr. Lee believes, being able to see the “diverse connectivity across national boundaries” might motivate them to “create cooperation in many aspects between countries.”

Globalization produces fertile ground for understanding. “Unlike previous generations, young Asian students of today are quick to form a rapport with their peers from different countries,” Dr. Lee said. For example, South Korean pop culture reaches far across Asia, and this “Korean wave” or *hallyu*, creates bonds of shared interest. Korean universities host an increasing number of students from other Asian countries, and this, according to Dr. Lee, means that “the trans-Asia peace model has great potential as a leading university curriculum during this era of globalization.”

Dr. Lee and her colleagues already see the impact of their course. An international service-learning component connected the SWU students with women in India and Vietnam. Through discussions, the young peacemakers-in-training realized these Indian and Vietnamese women are not recipients of aid but “colleagues with whom they should seek to identify common contexts and work with in close solidarity.”



Prof. Gui-woo Lee (left) and her colleague,
Prof. Min Kayoung.

Education: A Life-changing Experience

Albert Hung

“
I realize it was no coincidence,
but God's greater plan.”

“My study at Chung Chi College was a life-changing experience,” Albert Hung believes.” Mr. Hung credits those years at Chung Chi College with laying the foundation for the professional success he achieved in the financial services industry. “The higher education at Chung Chi College sharpened my thinking process and provided me with useful tools in dealing with the challenges in life.”

“With the training and knowledge gained in university, I was able to say good-bye to poverty and have an enjoyable and affluent life,” said Mr. Hung, who is now a founding shareholder and chief investment officer of a boutique investment management company in Australia. “However, I have never forgotten the difficult times when I was small. And, after I became a Christian, I also came to understand and believe that Christians should always be willing to help those in need, if they are able to.” So he responded enthusiastically when the United Board



Mr. Albert Hung

asked for his help in creating opportunities to strengthen the academic credentials of educators in Myanmar.

“Higher education is one of the fundamental factors for people living in underdeveloped Asian countries to improve their quality of life,” Mr. Hung said. Myanmar is considering

ways to reform its higher education system, and the success of those efforts will depend, in part, on having sufficient numbers of qualified faculty members. With Mr. Hung’s generous scholarship gift, the United Board is supporting advanced degree studies of three educators from Myanmar: Lathaw Doi Ra from Kachin Theological College and Seminary is studying for a master of education degree at Hong Kong Baptist University (see *story on facing page*); Naw Aye Thiri Myint of Myanmar Institute of Theology (MIT) is studying for a master’s degree in psychology at Assumption University, Thailand; and Nant Hlaing Yadana Soe, also of MIT, is studying for a master’s degree in counseling at De La Salle University, Philippines.

As a student, Mr. Hung was unaware of the close relationship that the United Board has long enjoyed with Chung Chi College, which dates back to the college’s founding in 1951. “I only became aware of the United Board’s contribution to Chung Chi College in 2014,” he said. “However, when I look back at the timing and sequence of events leading to the establishment of the scholarship, I realize it was no coincidence, but God’s greater plan.”

Our Generous Donors Change Lives

More than 600 individuals expressed their commitment to our mission by making a contribution to the United Board last year. We invite our readers to renew their support in 2015 or to make a first-time gift.

A gift in support of the United Board Faculty Scholarship Program transforms the lives of dedicated faculty members and, through them, a generation of university students. To make a gift in support of this program, please contact Trudy Loo, Senior Manager for Development (tloo@unitedboard.org or 1.212.870.2612) or Ricky Cheng, Executive Vice President (rcheng@unitedboard.org or 852.3943.4215).

A Teacher and a Student

Lathaw Doi Ra, Kachin Theological College and Seminary

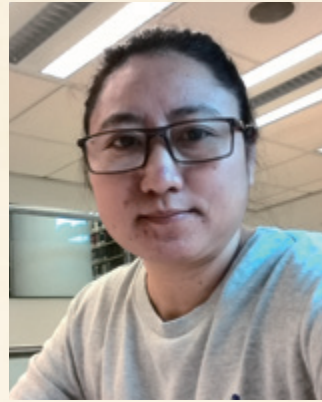
“
This situation calls out for
student guidance and counseling.”

It has been almost 20 years since Lathaw Doi Ra was a student, and she finds that she is older than many of her professors at Hong Kong Baptist University. A theologian by training, she is now earning a master of education degree, with a concentration in English language teaching. Her course of study is an opportunity to bring fresh ideas to her home institution, Kachin Theological College and Seminary (KTCS) in Myanmar, where she is the assistant head of the English department.

“English is compulsory in the Myanmar education system,” she explained in an interview, “but students just learn through rote — they don’t really understand how English works.” When that style of teaching and rote learning is applied throughout the higher education system, it leaves students without critical thinking skills. Last year, KTCS started a Bachelor of Arts and Theological Studies (BATS) program to offer education that challenges students to raise questions, connect ideas, and solve problems. Now, at Hong Kong Baptist University, Mrs. Lathaw is being introduced to new teaching methodologies that can strengthen the BATS program and deliver “real education to the Kachin community.”

Mrs. Lathaw’s studies in Hong Kong have opened her eyes to other ways to support students. “I can say the most useful thing I’ve learned for my college is the need for student guidance and counseling,” she said. “Young people in Myanmar are using drugs, and this situation calls out for student guidance and counseling.” When she returns to Myanmar, Mrs. Lathaw plans to talk with leaders at her institution about ways to offer guidance and counseling services at KTCS.

In the meantime, she savors the resources she finds in Hong Kong, such as easy access to library books, high-speed Internet, and clear phone connections. She



Lathaw Doi Ra studying at
Hong Kong Baptist University

also is trying to open connections that can strengthen KTCS over the long term. Exchange programs offer one avenue for faculty development, and partnerships between KTCS and foreign universities could smooth the road. “It is very difficult to get a visa to study abroad,” she said. “This process would be simplified if a student

were going abroad to a university affiliated with KTCS, and it would make it easier for foreign teachers to come to KTCS for short-term placements.”

The United Board Chung Chi College Alumni Scholarship is funding the graduate studies of Mrs. Lathaw and two other educators from Myanmar. The United Board is grateful to Mr. Albert Hung for his generous support of this scholarship fund.

Give As a Monthly Supporter

As a monthly donor, you can make a substantial difference in supporting Christian higher education in Asia. Monthly gifts of \$10, \$25, or other amount of your choosing provide dependable and cost-effective support for our programs and network of institutions across Asia. Contact Trudy Loo, Senior Manager for Development, at 1.212.870.2612 or tloo@unitedboard.org, to learn more about the impact and projects your donation could support and to sign up!

Observing Leadership in Action

Bernadine Joseph, Stella Maris College

“
The experience was mine
for the taking.”

In 2003, soon after she completed her placement as a United Board Fellow at Valparaiso University in the United States, Bernadine Joseph wrote that “new life experiences that will direct my career and life paths have taken shape.” Today, more than a decade later, she is applying her United Board Fellow experiences and leadership lessons to her role as vice principal of Stella Maris College, a Catholic women’s college in Chennai, India. In fact, she said more recently, “some memories of those experiences are so clearly in my mind that neither distance nor time can ever erase them.”

“What I still carry with me is the high level of professionalism I found at Valpo,” Dr. Joseph said. She was able “to observe leadership in action, as it were, orchestrated by my two women mentors.” These two associate provosts, one for student affairs and the other for academic affairs, outlined a comprehensive program for Dr. Joseph’s stay on the Indiana campus. This enabled her to discover how the wheels of administration turned, as she observed the work of each Student Affairs unit, joined departmental staff meetings, and interacted with people of diverse backgrounds. “I could see, because I was there; the experience was mine for the taking”

At her second placement, at Ewha Womans University in Korea, she learned about ways to build leadership through the curriculum. At Ewha, “almost all aspects of education are geared toward changing women’s attitudes about themselves and their place in society.”

That begins with the university’s name: the use of the word “Womans” is deliberate, she said, “a reflection of the intention to focus on the empowerment of every single woman who walks through the portals of the university.” Her conversations with former and then-current students indicated that the women’s studies course has been instrumental in redefining students’ attitudes, roles, and functions in relation to society.



Bernadine Joseph, Vice Principal, Stella Maris College

Since her fellowship ended, Dr. Joseph’s roles at Stella Maris have progressed from head of undergraduates in the Department of English to head of postgraduates to her current position as vice principal. These roles have given her opportunities to apply her own belief that clear communication is essential in the field of education. As Dr. Joseph wrote at the conclusion of her placement at Ewha, “One of the most important lessons I have learned here is that, in a work-related context, transparency and clarity are of the essence — these are crucial to building trust and confidence in a leader.”



Dr. Joseph speaking at Stella Maris’s College Day 2015.

Sharing Hospitality and Thankfulness

Iwan Sandjaja, Petra Christian University

“Faith and mind are members of one body.”

Iwan Njoto Sandjaja, an Indonesian PhD candidate in electrical and computer engineering, adds his voice to the big Texas welcome that greets United Board Fellows arriving for placements at Baylor University. It's his way of expressing thanks for the opportunity to earn his master's degree at De La Salle University in the Philippines with the support of the United Board Faculty Scholarship Program. "I had good experiences while I was at De La Salle University, and so I want to show hospitality to the United Board Fellows and thankfulness," he said in a recent interview. "I also want to talk to them about Christian education in Southeast Asia."

Mr. Iwan is drawn to the stories of other people. He began his career as a computer programmer, but he left that job for teaching at Petra Christian University because "I prefer to interact with people instead of machines." Now at Baylor, when he shares ideas with faculty from the United States, Asia, and other places, he sees how unique each university is. That's a source of inspiration for him. "I am very thankful to the United Board for addressing the biggest challenges facing universities in Asia through its network," he said. "Sometimes we cannot see our problems clearly because we never get away from our own country and family. Asian educators need to do more networking, more faculty and student exchange programs, and more collaborative research."

He also finds ways to combine his scientific interests with spiritual inquiry. At Baylor, he is part of the Conyers Graduate Scholars Program, which encourages doctoral students to explore questions regarding faith, learning, vocation, and the university. "Faith and mind are members of one body," he said. "They are like my two eyes, which make one sight." His wife's seminary studies inspire the couple to someday blend their interests and



Iwan Sandjaja (kneeling, right) with international scholars at Baylor University, including United Board Fellow Sigit Purnomo (far left).

expertise. "If it is God's will, we can contribute to Bible translation, specifically to the many ethnic languages of Indonesia. We hope that we can use the computer for natural language processing and machine translation to accelerate the process."

Mr. Iwan remains an educator at heart, and he plans to return to Petra Christian University after he receives his PhD. He is grateful to the United Board for recognizing the power of networking and hopes other Asian educators can enjoy experiences similar to his. "Sending professors and lecturers to other universities in different countries for a sabbatical year will be like a great stepping stone that benefits both sender and receiver."

United Board Fellows Program: A New Look

Exciting changes are coming to the United Board Fellows Program. In 2016, this two-year program will transition to a one-year experience, featuring an intensive U.S.-based summer program, online networking and mentoring, a semester-long placement, and a summative reflective seminar in Asia. We trust these changes will make the program even more effective in meeting the needs of leaders at colleges and universities in Asia. For further information, contact Vivica Xiong, vxiong@unitedboard.org.

Instilling Pride in Indigenous Culture

Christine de Vera, Miriam College

“
Indigenous cultures are alive and
very much part of the present.”



Christine de Vera of Miriam College's Center for Applied Music.

“The Philippines is a veritable hotspot for festivals,” according to Christine de Vera, a faculty member at Miriam College’s Center for Applied Music. “They range from religious to cultural festivals, from the significant to the absurd, from small town to big regional celebrations, and from local to international patronage. “These

festivals can be important income-generating activities, but Ms. de Vera believes this economic imperative must be balanced against cultural sensitivity. That goal inspired her to incorporate her research on the Lang-ay Festival in Bontoc, the capital city of Mountain Province, into Miriam College’s leisure and travel management program.

Ms. de Vera trained as a classical pianist, and her love for music sparked her interest in ethnography. “The 90s were a great time to be in the world of arts, music, and culture in the Philippines,” she recalled. “The environment was abuzz with so many opportunities to create and perform music, but more alluring was the call of research on Philippine music.” She began traveling to Bontoc in 2000 to study the local music and, as part of this field research, she and her colleagues studied “all aspects of cultural observances within the environment.” In 2009, Bontoc residents invited her to their Lang-ay Festival, a weeklong festival in April that highlights local music, dance, costumes, and cultural symbols.

A clear purpose motivated Ms. de Vera as she developed a teaching module on the Lang-

ay Festival for Miriam College students. “I want to accomplish one important aspect in their education as students and, subsequently, as professionals in their field: cultural awareness and respect.” She hopes students will see that “indigenous cultures are very much alive and part of the present and that they are dynamic and constantly reconfigured by the people who own them.” As students prepare for careers in travel and tourism, she wants them to recognize the importance of applying ethical standards to efforts to showcase cultural heritage and practices.

The Asian University Digital Resource Network (AUDRN), launched in 2009 with the support of the United Board, unites 12 Philippine colleges and universities in developing innovative curricula on Asian cultural heritage. It has helped Ms. de Vera crystallize her ideas and share them with other educators. “My materials have been digitally disseminated in the AUDRN network so that they are able to contribute to relevant discussions and, hopefully, solutions,” she said. “More importantly, I see the AUDRN as a network that can provide feedback and help us determine what will apply to the larger educational system.”



Street dancing during the Lang-ay Festival.

A Fresh Look at Christianity in Asia

Book Review

Felix Wilfred has done us a great service by editing *The Oxford Handbook of Christianity in Asia* (Oxford University Press, 2014). Over four years, with the support of the United Board, Dr. Wilfred and his international editorial board brought together 35 of the best scholars in the world to write special essays for this book on a vast array of themes from a variety of disciplines.

Part I sets the vast stage of this work with five essays on the regional history and geographic diffusion of Christianity in West, South, Southeast, East, and Central Asia. Part II goes immediately beyond these territorial notions of “Cross Cultural Flows and Pan Asian Movements of Asian Christianity.” Here we find seven studies of Pentecostal and charismatic churches, contextual theologies, the ecumenical movement, the rise of feminism, new religious movements inspired by Christianity as well as cross-cultural interpretations of holy scripture. Christianity and Asian cultures have mutually influenced each other for centuries. “The active role of culture and the agency of Asians are clearly manifest here.”

This perspective on mutuality accelerates in Part III with nine chapters that focus on “Asian Christianities and the Social-Cultural Processes.” Here we find deep discussions of Christianity as shaped by the contentious forces of colonialism, nationalism and modernity. They include problematic issues such as conversion, peace and conflict, democracy and socio-political hierarchy, education, women’s rights and the articulation of Christian values in the emerging public life of early modern Asian societies.

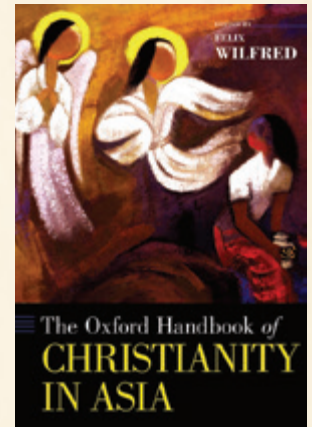
The final section looks to the future of Christianity in Asia. Eight scholars consider how this diverse world religion may evolve in Asia with its social and cultural environments and dynamic regional economies. How will Christianity evolve as a form of public life, as skills of spirituality and as forms of worship? How will Christian communities change through urbanization, expanded education and migrations across the region? Will Christianity continue to inspire tribal and marginalized peoples who live on the edges of physical and social boundaries in Asian nations? A.B. Laksana writes in this context about “multiple

religious belonging” in Asia. Francis X. Clooney S.J. ends the volume with “In the Light of Asia: Reflections of a Western Christian.” Indeed, we of the West have much to learn from Asian Christianity.

Dr. Wilfred’s thematic and inter-disciplinary approach to collecting these essays on Christianity in Asia is refreshing. Asian Christians described in these chapters are subjects with agency rather than being passive recipients of an imported Christianity from the West. “Everywhere operative is the process of appropriation of the Christian faith and institutions according to the genius of the various peoples and societies of the continent” (p.7). Missionaries from the West played important roles, but the primary narrative is not simply their bringing the Good News to Asia. Indeed, Christianity rides many waves of migration and cross-cultural encounter within the region. The United Board’s work in strengthening Christian presence in Asian higher education fits precisely into this pattern of intra-Asian collaboration.

We can also sense from these pages the ambiguity of the relationship between Christianity and modernity in Asia. Several chapters describe the role of Christianity in the process of modernization in Asian societies. “Ironically,” says Wilfred, “the very Christianity viewed in the West as an anti-modern force was looked to in Asia as a gateway to modern science, technology, education, (and) modern medicine” (p.9). Christian colleges established in Asia over the past 200 years, for example, display the modernizing legacy of Christianity in Asian contexts. This is the legacy that the United Board seeks to strengthen and extend into the 21st century.

Reviewed by Glenn Shive, Vice President for Programs, United Board. A fuller version of the book review will appear on the United Board's website later this year.



A Heart Deep in the Field

Sokha Om, Royal University of Phnom Penh

“Tertiary institutions play vital roles in shaping the nation’s human resources.”

“I love working in the university environment,” says Sokha Om, an English teacher and staff member in the studies office at Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP) in Cambodia. “My heart is deep in this field, and I understand how tertiary institutions play vital roles in shaping the nation’s human resources.” The United Board Faculty Scholarship Program is helping her gain a broader base of academic knowledge and management skills so that she can contribute even more to educational development and innovation at RUPP.

In 2012, Ms. Om began PhD studies in educational leadership and management at De La Salle University in the Philippines, with support from the United Board. She

knew she had the passion to make positive change at her university, but she realized she also needed new tools to translate that passion into action. “Leading and managing an institution requires formal learning, training and practice, as in any other subject area,”

she reflected. “For instance, school administrators must understand the theories and concepts regarding leadership and management to better inform their decision-making and daily institutional operations. They also need to have technical skills such as strategic planning, human resource management, curriculum development, and research program management.”



Sokha Om of RUPP.

Small Grants Program

The United Board’s Small Grants Program helps innovative educators launch small, start-up activities and pedagogical experiments to enhance whole person education in their institutions. The themes or topics of these projects are open.

Small Grants Program proposals should show how the envisioned activities are linked to whole person education at the university. The proposed activity should be part of a well-reasoned and researched process leading to a new sustainable program for students at the university.

The maximum award through this program is \$5,000. There is no deadline for applications for the Small Grants Program, and the review process generally takes about three months.

For more information, please contact grants@unitedboard.org.

De La Salle University has hosted United Board Faculty Scholars since 2003, in fields as diverse as applied linguistics and ecosystem management. Faculty scholars are introduced to a new culture and new styles of teaching and learning, as well as the substantive content of their area of specialization. “It is a long and challenging journey for me to take my PhD at De La Salle University,” Ms. Om says, but one she feels is extremely worthwhile as she builds her career around service to her students and colleagues in education. “I have the goal to create a program of educational leadership and management in my home country. I believe it is the best way to train ethical, competent and effective educational leaders.”

Front cover photo: Students at Women’s Christian College, Chennai, India.