

EDUCATION IN SERVICE TO OTHERS

Our Asian trustees give us vital insights into the region, helping us shape the contours of our programs to meet the needs of Asian educators and students. Father Ben Nebres, a Jesuit and a leading voice in higher education in Asia, has been a trustee since July 2010. He retired as president of Ateneo de Manila University in June 2011 after 18 years of service.

— Nancy E. Chapman



Father Ben Nebres

YOU HAVE ADVOCATED FOR “COOPERATION IN THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTIANITY.” WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THIS?

Universities in the Asia region are driven by international rankings. In the push toward excellence, there is a tendency to obtain prestige by linking with

stronger universities. But what about the institutions that are in need? How can we share our resources with them?

At the end of the day, Christianity asks “for whom” or “for what?” Yes, we want excellent doctors, lawyers and other professionals. But for what purpose? Our focal point is our neighbor — the Good Samaritan looks for the person in need. So we are in need of “education of the heart” as well as the mind. We ask our students to look for deeper values, whether in their study of literature or science or other subjects.

HOW DO STUDENTS AND FACULTY REACT TO THIS EMPHASIS ON DEEPER VALUES?

Students are receptive to the idea of education in service to others and they have lots of imagination. So with them, higher education can be like the parable of the mustard seed. Many of our alumni have translated what they learned at university into service for others and have set up social enterprises for the poor.

Faculty are interested in principle, but we need to do something to the liberal arts system to facilitate this. Right now the system sends mixed signals. There is a strong push for faculty to publish in ISI (Institute for Scientific Information) journals — this is one of the key metrics for advancement of their careers. How can we introduce other metrics? How do we marry concern for others with the need to publish? One way is to create ISI journals that will publish articles on such topics as service learning and how to raise the capacity of an institution in Cambodia.

YOU HAVE EMPHASIZED INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION DURING YOUR YEARS AS AN EDUCATOR. WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT FOR STUDENTS IN THE PHILIPPINES AND ACROSS ASIA?

I want students to see globalization as a personal experience. Even if university graduates never leave their home country, they can’t afford to be insular. They need to understand what is going on in the world around them.

In the ASEAN region, we have special needs. The ASEAN charter sets the goal of open borders by 2015. ASEAN + 3 — with China, Japan and Korea — is emerging as an actual region. I tell young people, “This is the world you will be living in, so you need to get to know it.”

At Ateneo de Manila, we want our students to study in other countries. And having international students on our campus makes a big difference. We want our students to become good friends with students from other countries because someday they will be leaders and they will want to use these networks. To understand the world, students need to connect with people from other countries — there is no substitute for friendship.

The region is moving toward integration. This is being studied from the political and economic angles, but higher education also needs to take this seriously. These institutions need to have greater consciousness of what they should be doing to integrate.

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EDUCATION IN SERVICE TO OTHERS

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CAN YOU GIVE SOME EXAMPLES OF WHERE YOU SEE THESE IDEAS OF COOPERATION AND SERVICE IN UNITED BOARD PROGRAMS?

I certainly find it in its service learning programs. I also see it in the Local Knowledge Initiative. All cultures can contribute to the greater richness of

humanity. So our challenge is to capture local knowledge without fossilizing it, to help cultures integrate their unique contributions into the modern world without losing their identities.

For the United Board and its partners, we always want to be sure that the people who manage programs keep the liberal

arts tradition and concern for others in mind, as well as their focus on the student. **UB**

Go Online

Go to unitedboard.org for more information on United Board programs.

PROGRAMS

YUNNAN UNIVERSITY

SERVICE LEARNING: INTEGRATING ACADEMICS AND PRACTICE



"IF there is no United Board, I would have no idea of service learning," reflected Xiang Rong, an associate professor of social work at Yunnan University. But since she was first introduced to the concept by Birgit Linder, then serving as the United Board's China/Hong Kong program director, Dr. Xiang and her colleagues have made service learning a key part of their social work curriculum.

"Service learning can help raise the field of social work in China," she said in a recent interview. The field is new and the education system to support it is still developing. When she met Birgit Linder, Dr. Xiang was thinking of ways that she and her colleagues could uplift their social work department and improve its teaching and research. She was not familiar with service learning, but it fit well with what she was trying to accomplish. "Social work is like service learning — it's practice and theory at the same time."

Most Chinese university programs in social work are less than 10 years old; started in 1993, Yunnan University's

Department of Social Work is more established than most of the 200-plus programs in the country. That gives it some advantage in developing the structure and placements needed to support service learning, Dr. Xiang finds. While the major focus is on the service component, service learning also requires structure and reflection to be effective. "We need to ensure that this is more than volunteer work," she said. "We need to keep the focus on developing knowledge and skills."

When Yunnan University students work in a community, they first do a quick assessment in order to match the services they can provide with local needs. The work they ultimately undertake may be complicated or simple, depending on the student and the community. Students might work with the elderly in Kunming, or in rural areas, or with migrant workers at Heart to Heart, a community organization that Dr. Xiang chairs. As they gain the community's trust and learn more about the issue at hand, students work with faculty to reflect on why their service works or not and then redesign it to better fit needs. "It's a rigorous, circular process that builds on reflection."

Reflection is an integral part of Dr. Xiang's own professional development. She continues to reflect upon the

practices and ideas she encountered during her United Board Fellow placements at The Chinese University of Hong Kong and the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. Inspired by those placements, she wants to better integrate academics and practice into the social work pedagogy in China, and she hopes to remove some of the barriers that separate academics from the community and each other, so that all those who share concerns about social development are able to draw on each other's ideas.

Her reflection has persuaded her that service learning can help address broader issues in China's development. "Service learning is exactly what higher education in China needs — it's the right thing to do at this time," Dr. Xiang said. With so many students entering the higher education system, "teaching has become mechanical, and education has become a commodity to be purchased," she observed. Through service learning, students are trained to see how knowledge can have an impact on the community. "This touches upon the essence of humanity in every way." **UB**

Go Online

Go to unitedboard.org for more information on this initiative.

MISSION

The United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia works to support a Christian presence in colleges and universities in Asia.

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PARTNERS

SOEGIJAPRANATA CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY MAKING REAL-WORLD CONNECTIONS

AS rector, Budi Widianarko works from an administrative office at Soegijapranata Catholic University in Semarang, Indonesia, but as an environmental toxicologist, he also relishes going out into the field for research. “A researcher wants to see, smell, or touch something in the field and experience something in a hands-on way,” he explains. The same is true for students, he finds. “We realize our students are more interested in participatory learning, as this triggers their empathy and helps them make a real-world connection to the subject.”



Service learning is one way that Dr. Widianarko and his faculty are making teaching and learning more effective at Soegijapranata; it's also a way that they are developing shared interests with the United Board. “The service learning approach is built on the idea of moving a student to action in relation to their knowledge,” he said. With support from the United Board, Soegijapranata has been implementing innovative Local Knowledge and Environment and Health projects that help students match what they learn in the classroom to actual conditions in the community.

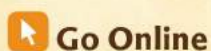
At Soegijapranata, the idea of community permeates every academic department, through its university-wide focus on “eco-settlements.” As part of this orientation, each department offers at least one course that focuses on ecological settlement. It's an opportunity for faculty to integrate teaching, research and community service and for students to apply what they learn in the classroom to human settlements, whether a household, a city or an island.

This approach also fits well with the United Board's current initiatives in Local Knowledge and Environment and Health. Soegijapranata's highly regarded Department of Architecture is taking students into the field to enrich their understanding of traditional Javanese architecture, not only by showing them the buildings but by facilitating conversations with people who live in these “eco-settlements.” The lecturer explains the architecture, while community residents give insights into the local philosophy and values, such as harmony with nature or security, that have helped shape the style. “This combines architectural study with traditional wisdom,” Dr. Widianarko explained.

But students also need to master the methods of their disciplines, he emphasizes, and this dimension is a priority in a project that helps students measure the carbon footprints of different communities. The participating students live in three very different settlements — an agricultural village, a coastal community and their own home or dormitory — for one week each. While there, they make notes on energy consumption — whether for electricity, transport, food production or other activities — and use this data to calculate each community's carbon footprint. Back on campus, they reflect on experience, compare the efficiencies and inefficiencies of each community, and identify ways to adjust behaviors.

With United Board support, Soegijapranata is now disseminating the carbon footprint service learning model to interested colleges and universities. Asian countries share concerns about carbon emissions and higher education institutions can play a role. “This can be a fruitful area of working together and promoting student exchange,” Dr. Widianarko believes.

*ASIANetwork, a consortium of U.S. liberal arts colleges with programs on Asia, has awarded grants for collaborative service learning projects at Soegijapranata Catholic University (with Eckerd College) and Yunnan University (with Warren Wilson College). The United Board helped facilitate these collaborations and is supporting the participation of Budi Widianarko and Xiang Rong at the 2012 ASIANetwork conference. **UB***



Go to unitedboard.org for more information on this initiative.

UNITED BOARD FRIEND A TALE OF TWO CONTINENTS: DR. TIMOTHY LIGHT

THE United Board has always been “a combination of two continents,” with offices in New York and Hong Kong and partner institutions in Asia, recalled



former chair Timothy Light in a recent conversation about the organization's history. As the United Board approached the new millennium, United Board Chair James Laney, President Emeritus of Emory University, former Ambassador to South Korea and former missionary to South Korea, sensed the organization's potential to further deepen its relationships with Asian educators and partner institutions. Under his leadership, trustees and staff began to seek new ways to benefit from the diversity of cultures, ideas and experience within the United Board network. This process of “Asianization,” as it eventually was called, transformed the United Board's governance and its mode of program development.

A first step was to “achieve balance among Asian and non-Asian trustees and equality in their roles,” Dr. Light said. The October 2000 board meeting, held on the Tunghai University campus, was pathbreaking in several ways: the board was composed equally of Asian and non-Asian trustees and it was holding its first-ever meeting in Asia. Equally important, trustees recognized the genuine need for the United Board to have a physical presence in Asia. Over time, as board and staff surveyed the program landscape in Asia, “the remoteness of New York became evident,” Dr. Light found. “A more indigenous viewpoint could only be developed from a base on the ground in the region.”

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PROGRAM CALENDAR

PRACTICING THE PRESENCE OF GOD - CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION IN ASIA

Speaker: Dr. Michael Gilligan, In-coming Trustee, United Board and President, The Henry Luce Foundation

April 13, 2012

Chung Chi College, The Chinese University of Hong Kong (Hong Kong)

INTERNATIONAL CAMP ON LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

May 23-25, 2012

Soegijapranata Catholic University (Indonesia)

INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY IN ASIAN CULTURES AND THEOLOGIES (IASACT)

June 9-July 14, 2012

Chung Chi College, The Chinese University of Hong Kong (Hong Kong)

UNITED BOARD CONFERENCE ON RELIGIONS AND ASIAN PUBLIC LIFE

July 6-7, 2012

Chung Chi College, The Chinese University of Hong Kong (Hong Kong)

UNITED BOARD FELLOWS LEADERSHIP SEMINAR

July 23-27, 2012

Silliman University (Philippines)

NEW WEBSITE LAUNCHED

Please visit: www.unitedboard.org



The Hong Kong office opened in 2001, with David Kwang-sun Suh, Iris Ng and Betty Abregana (now Betty Cernol-McCann) as its first staff. With this “truly successful team” in place, the United Board was better able to develop programs to match partners’ priorities. For instance, over the years, United Board partners had indicated the need for more research in Asian Christian studies. “We had a great opportunity, with two outstanding theologians, David Suh and Dick Wood [then United Board president], on staff at that time,” Dr. Light said. “And while theological education had not been the primary work of the United Board, it seemed warranted to initiate a program that brought an Asian Christian theological perspective to the study of other university subjects.” The annual Institute for Advanced Study in Asian Cultures and Theologies (IASACT), introduced in 2004, continues today. The Asian University Leadership Program and the Coastal Resource Management Program are examples of two other programs that emerged in response to partner-identified needs in leadership development and collaborative degree programs, respectively.

The benefits flow two ways, between Asia and New York. Decades earlier, it was evident to those living in Asia that many United Board partner institutions had already become first-rate institutions, and it was obvious that the quality of United Board work could only be enhanced by having programs directed and managed out of Asia.

Dr. Light’s own career is a tale of two continents. His career began as an English teacher at The Chinese University of Hong Kong, and when he finally returned to the United States for good, he taught Chinese language and linguistics and held various administrative jobs at the institutions where he worked. Having been fortunate enough to serve as a visiting professor both at the Beijing Language and Culture University and at his original Asian home, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, his knowledge of and high regard for Asian-run institutions were renewed and increased over the years. **UB**

DID YOU KNOW?



THE 1955 movie *Love is a Many Splendored Thing* won Academy Awards for Best Song and Best Costume Design, and featured two major Hollywood stars, William Holden and Jennifer Jones. Another actor in the film, Beulah Quo, later became a star of the United Board, as a trustee, advisor and generous donor.

Before Hollywood beckoned, Beulah Kwoh (she used “Quo” as her stage name) worked as a teacher in the 1940s and 1950s, at Ginling Women’s College and at a Los Angeles community college. She applied to be a dialect coach for Jennifer Jones, who played the role of the widowed Eurasian doctor, Han Suyin, in the film, but instead was cast as Han Suyin’s aunt. Acting became both career and a cause for

Mrs. Kwoh, as she was determined to portray Asians and Asian-Americans with dignity and honor. She appeared in more than 20 films — including such blockbusters as *MacArthur* and *Chinatown* — and made more than 100 television appearances, from miniseries to soap operas.

Mrs. Kwoh served as a United Board trustee from 1982 to 1988 and then as a counselor until her death in 2003. To commemorate her enduring support for Ginling Women’s College, the college’s North American alumnae established a United Board endowment in her name to provide scholarships for Ginling students. **UB**