

UNITED BOARD

HORIZONS

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UNITED BOARD FOR CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION IN ASIA



In this issue:

United Board Fellows Program Celebrates a Milestone

see pages 7-10

Message from the President

Our Window in Asia

In 2001, the United Board's trustees made the bold decision to open an office in Asia. For nearly 80 years, our programs and grant-making had been managed from a single New York office. Modern telecommunications had certainly eased the challenges of communicating with colleagues at Asian colleges and universities, and New York-based staff were frequent travelers to Asia. Still, trustees contended that a "center" or "institute" in Asia was needed: simply put, the United Board needed to place itself in a position to better understand the context in which Asian educators work and listen closely as they define their needs and goals.

The Hong Kong office became our front window in Asia, and its clear view sparked the genesis of many programs. Skilled hands in our Hong Kong office brought the Asian University Leaders Program (AULP) and Institute for Advanced Study in Asian Cultures and Theologies (IASACT) to life and ensured that they reflected the interests of Asian educators. Our Hong Kong-based staff recognized the growing strength of Asian institutions and their capacity to offer placements for the Faculty Scholarship Program and United Board Fellows Program. Conversations with old and new friends on campuses across Asia showed us how to weave leadership and faculty development, culture and religion, peace education, and other threads into a more cohesive program framework.

Many talented staff members have brought our trustees' vision to life. Special recognition is due to the three individuals who, over the past 15 years, have filled the position of vice president for programs: David Suh, a noted theologian; Betty Cernol-McCann, a perceptive social scientist and university administrator; and Glenn Shive, a specialist in international education with a deep reservoir of ideas and contacts. This summer, as Glenn Shive concludes his service, Angela Wai-ching Wong joins our staff as the new vice president for programs. Dr. Wong is well-known to many in our community, having served as a United Board trustee and a long-time member of the faculty at The Chinese University of Hong Kong. We welcome Dr. Wong as she opens a new chapter in the Hong Kong office's rich history of innovative programming in support of whole person education.



Nancy E. Chapman
President

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Network News

Visit Us Online

The United Board's website has a new look, one that we hope will make our online home more interesting and informative. We invite you to learn more about whole person education, explore our programs, and meet "the people of our mission" — the individuals whose achievements, dedication, and generosity are at the heart of our work.

Our online address remains the same: www.unitedboard.org. Please visit our website, and feel free to share your impressions with us.



United Board Executive Vice President Ricky Cheng, second from right, with ICU alumni (from left) Tommy Cho (1982), George Yuan (1964), and Jeremiah Wong (1968).

Reconnecting with Scholarship Recipients

In the mid-1950s, the United Board began offering scholarships for Hong Kong students to attend International Christian University (ICU) in Japan. The program required a leap of faith for its earliest participants: a willingness to leave familiar settings in a region still recovering from war and to enroll in a newly established institution. Yet many of the 100 or so individuals who received these United Board scholarships consider their ICU experience to be transformative.

If you are one of these scholarship recipients, the United Board and ICU communities would like to hear from you! Please re-introduce yourself to us by sending an email to icuscholars@unitedboard.org.

Applications and Proposals Welcome

The application process for the **2017-2018 United Board Fellows Program** is now open. This one-year program prepares mid-career faculty and administrators for future leadership roles within their home institutions in Asia. Nominations are due September 30; full applications are due October 31.

The United Board's **2017-2018 Institutional Grants Program** welcomes proposals for projects that advance the capacity of colleges and universities in the United Board's network to design and deliver whole person education in innovative and effective ways. The deadline for proposals is October 31. Proposals may approach this broad goal from a range of perspectives, including strengthening faculty, promoting leadership, enriching the curriculum, and improving practices and systems that relate to undergraduate programs within a department, faculty, or the whole institution.

Check our website in the coming weeks for information on the **2017-2018 Faculty Scholarship Program**. The anticipated deadline for applications is October 15.

Interfaith Dialogue on a Daily Basis

Jenee Peter, Union Christian College

“I am caught up in the dynamics of interfaith dialogue.”

Union Christian College, an interdenominational Christian college in Kerala, India, is fertile ground for interfaith dialogue. As Jenee Peter, a professor in the Department of History points out, “60 percent of the students are non-Christians and 50 percent of the faculty are from other faiths.” That means “there is interfaith dialogue here on a daily basis and, through experience, we are learning how to relate to each other and how to understand the perspectives of others.” A United Board grant for her project, “Religious Borrowings and Interfaith Dialogues,” gave her the means to dig deeper into the topic of interfaith understanding and introduce a series of student activities over the course of six months.

History was the starting point. “To have a dialogue, we first need to understand the other person’s faith and appreciate it,” Dr. Peter said. Students were asked to describe an aspect of their own religion — such as a symbol or church procession or temple festival — to classmates of another religion. Interviewing parents and grandparents helped students put their beliefs and traditions into more personal contexts and more easily share their religious history with classmates. In small teams, students visited several sacred sites and religious monuments. Later, they were encouraged to reflect on what they had seen and, as Dr. Peter explains, “to see if there is something similar with your own faith.” She expected her students to enjoy the action research but



Jenee Peter, Department of History, Union Christian College.

they “went beyond my expectation and imagination” and their excitement became infectious. “I could see this was leading to more than a project for students to present to the class,” she said. “Some kind of change was taking place in them.”

One of her goals was to help her students discuss religion, and by the end of the term, she could see both “a celebration of diversity and more open discussions in the classroom.” She hopes there might be ways to spark similar discussions in the surrounding community, so she and colleagues are developing plans for a Center for Peace Studies. The Center would serve as a cross-disciplinary platform that offers courses to students and then helps them find practical ways to apply their social commitment in the community.

Experiential education can change the outlook of teachers as well as students. “I was already familiar with the history and archaeology of interfaith dialogue, so at first, this project was similar to preparing a research paper,” Dr. Peter said. But, over time, her students’ participation changed her. “I am caught up in the dynamics and the people of interfaith dialogue because of my students,” she says. Rather than drawing conclusions, the project leaves Dr. Peter with a question for herself, her students, and her colleagues: “What is our capacity to bring about change?”

Support for Whole Person Education

Through its Culture and Religion in Asia program, the United Board offers grant support for projects that shed light on how people of different religious beliefs and practices understand and interact with each other in daily life. Please visit the United Board website (www.unitedboard.org) to learn about all of our program areas and our 2017-2018 Institutional Grants Program.

Soft and Hard Skills for a Healthy Life

Uttara Sok, Paññāsāstra University of Cambodia

“Holistically developed through this wonderful program.”

Uttara Sok, dean of the Faculty of Education at Paññāsāstra University of Cambodia (PUC), has managed a busy schedule since earning his PhD in education management at De La Salle University in 2008. “That PhD program was perfectly designed for educational practitioners,” he says, and in the changing landscape for higher education in Cambodia, there is strong demand for professionals who are knowledgeable about university systems and the means to develop, resource, evaluate, and improve them.

Support from the United Board Faculty Scholarship Program enabled Dr. Sok to earn his degree, and when he joined PUC in October 2008, he was eager to share the knowledge he had gained in curriculum development. “I initiated three new academic programs,” he said, “namely, the bachelor of education in early childhood education, the master of education in educational administration and leadership, and the doctor of philosophy in educational planning, policy, and management.”

Dr. Sok also benefited from courses on Lasallian philosophy and leadership ethics, as well as extensive reading of general materials. “I became a well-rounded person who is not a specialist but rather a generalist — a person who is equipped with both soft and hard skills for a healthy life,” he said. That changed his thinking about education. The primary purpose of education, in his view, “is not just to prepare people to make a living but also to lead a happy life,” he said.

Making that goal a reality is challenging in Cambodia. Higher education institutions can be reluctant to introduce liberal arts courses and many students want to focus solely on their majors in preparation for professional careers. Fortunately, at PUC, Dr. Sok finds an institution committed to forming new scholars, engineers, and scientists while also fostering a spirit of compassion, moral conduct, and respect for human values. This holistic approach is evident in such course offerings as Personal Growth and Development, Logic and Critical Thinking, and Introduction to Ethics. PUC also has embraced a

national requirement that all bachelor’s degree programs start with a foundation year composed of four fields of study — social sciences, science, humanities and arts, and foreign languages — in addition to courses oriented toward the student’s major.

Dr. Sok often is called upon to share expertise with his PUC colleagues, the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia and other policy organizations, research teams, and professional associations. He responds willingly. He continues to build on the foundation he set during his PhD studies when, he says, he “changed profoundly, from a black-and-white perspective person to a grey perspective person who is holistically developed through this wonderful program.”



Uttara Sok, Dean, Faculty of Education, Paññāsāstra University.

Your Support Transforms Individuals

A gift in support of the United Board Faculty Scholarship Program transforms the lives of dedicated faculty members and, through them, a generation of students. To make a gift in support of this or other United Board faculty and leadership development programs, 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). To learn more, visit our website: www.unitedboard.org

An Educator and a Global Citizen

Herbert S. Corpuz, University of St. Louis

“The whole person approach helps build a borderless world.”

Herbert S. Corpuz considers himself to be a global citizen, so when he learned about the United Board Visiting Lecturers Program (VLP), he seized the chance to spend a few months at Kachin Theological College and Seminary in Myanmar. “It has always been my dream to learn about the cultures of different people through actual immersion in their community while serving them through sharing my expertise,” he says. Mr. Corpuz has an abundance of experience to share with students and faculty at his host institution: as the director of community extension services and a faculty member of the School of Education, Arts, and Sciences at the University of St. Louis in the Philippines, he teaches courses to students who aspire to be educators and he is deeply involved in USL’s community outreach, advocacy, and service-learning programs.

“Teaching here in Myanmar allows me to demonstrate or even enhance my skills as a teacher, leader, service-provider, and trainer, while learning to live with people of a unique culture,” he finds. Mr. Corpuz sees that his students are full of creative ideas, yet “what impedes them in sharing these ideas [internationally] is their ability to communicate in the English language.” He is teaching classes in English academic writing, designed to help his students improve their usage of grammar and expand their vocabulary. He also leads a teaching methodology class, which prepares students for their summer service-learning program, when they will be teaching English to young language learners.

Despite his busy schedule, Mr. Corpuz has found time to reflect on the similarities and differences between his home and host institutions. “Both schools provide opportunities for their students to be honed holistically, with programs that are directed toward students’ spiritual, moral, physical, intellectual, and social development.”

At the same time, the two institutions follow different paths to common goals, particularly in terms of their teaching and learning approaches. “USL has fully integrated, across all courses, the significance of research to advance learning, while at KTCS, research is a course requirement for students only in the final year,” he reports. Meanwhile, “KTCS has started integrating strict service-learning into its curriculum, while USL has integrated it into its curriculum for four years now.”

Mr. Corpuz sees the value of whole person education for students; his VLP experience shows him it has benefits for educators as well. “The whole person approach helps build a borderless world,” he says. “It allows educational institutions to work with synergy while building a professional learning community where each appreciates the other’s milestones, learns from each other’s unique practices, and journeys together toward shaping intellectual, spiritual, and moral global citizens.”



Herbert Corpuz of the University of St. La Salle.



Mr. Corpuz’s students at Kachin Theological College and Seminary in Myanmar.

200 Fellows, Boundless Benefits

United Board Fellows Program

“We marvel at the spectacular array of individuals who have brought this program to life.”



The 2014-2016 Fellows met for the first time at the University of Macau in August 2014. Their fellowship experience concludes in June 2016.

With our 2016-2017 class of Fellows, the United Board Fellows Program reaches a major milestone: a total of 200 Fellows have been selected for leadership training since the program was introduced in 2002. We marvel at the spectacular array of individuals who have brought this program to life," says United Board President Nancy Chapman. Fellows have come from 11 countries and regions of Asia; from 59 institutions, large and small, private and public; from more than 40 academic disciplines. What unites this diverse group is a clear-eyed recognition that effective leadership sets the foundation for strong colleges and universities committed to outstanding quality in teaching and learning.

Rita Pullium, who served as the United Board's vice president when the Fellows Program was launched, observes that "to a great extent, faculty determine the quality and reputation of an academic institution." From that vantage point, a leadership development program seems a natural extension of the United Board's commitment to faculty development. A college or university leader typically rises through the ranks of

the faculty, often promoted to leadership roles, as Dr. Pullium points out, "because of competence in their field, success as a professor, and respect from their colleagues." However, many have not had the benefit of training or direct experience in leading a unit or an institution. The United Board Fellows Program offers experiential learning to these rising leaders, and in the process it has become an investment in the future of their home institutions.

From its inception, the program has been structured, in Dr. Pullium's words, as a longer-term experience, "similar to an apprenticeship or a mentorship." During placements at host institutions, Fellows were paired with a faculty member or administrator who could expose them to new styles of teaching and learning as well as departmental or institutional decision-making processes. To make the training more global, one placement took place at an academic institution in North America and the other in the Asia-Pacific region.

The results have been impressive. Five program alumni have risen to serve as president or principal of their

United Board Fellows Program

respective institutions, and dozens of others now hold positions as deputy rectors, vice presidents, deans, or department chairs. Some lead efforts to internationalize their campuses, and some have been charged with reforming curricula or introducing new courses. Others are contributing to national discussions on education reform. Fellows have become ambassadors for whole person education, sharing with colleagues what they have learned on other campuses about addressing the intellectual, spiritual, and ethical needs of students.

Fellows have embraced collaborative leadership styles. Le Nguyen Hanh Phuoc, a 2012-2014 Fellow from Hue University in Vietnam realized “that being a leader is not about showing people how much knowledge you have. A good leader is someone who knows how to connect people around them and encourage them to work together in developing the institution.” Other Fellows echo that sense of inclusion.

Through their placements in Asia and North America, Fellows also are reminded that students — not buildings or



Fellows in the Class of 2010-2012 relax during their seminar in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

A Diverse Group of Committed Leaders

They are

200

rising leaders
committed to strengthening
higher education in Asia

They come from

11

countries and regions of Asia

They represent

59

Asian colleges and
universities

United Board Fellows
from 2002 to the present

They have been
hosted by

55

Asia-Pacific and
North American
colleges and
universities

They represent more than

40

academic disciplines

They have been supported by
more than

100

contributions from
foundations, institutions, and individuals

budgets, international rankings or individual promotions — form the heart of higher education. “My classes focus more on the student learning process,” writes Mika Shaura, a 2014-2016 Fellow from Assumption University in Thailand. Others report that they have made the teaching-learning process more interactive, and created more opportunities for students to voice their views.

Our Fellows have seized opportunities to innovate — and inspired us to do the same. Drawing on feedback from program alumni, we are introducing a new format with the 2016-2017 program. The new format is condensed, as Fellows told us a one-year program with one placement would make it possible for more faculty to consider participating. The program is focused more directly on acquiring leadership skills, beginning with an intensive summer institute on higher education leadership and management. Placement at an Asian college or university will introduce Fellows to new practices and new colleagues. The format also is geared toward practical outcomes: over the course of the program, Fellows will develop a project they want to implement at their home institutions, with online



Friendships were formed when the 2004-2006 Fellows gathered in Hong Kong.

mentorship to provide critique and support.

In this new chapter, we are certain that the generous spirit of our Fellows will continue to enrich the campuses of our network institutions. For, as Esther Romarate, a 2002-2004 Fellow from Central Philippine University wrote, “I believe that is one important thing which I have gotten from the United Board Fellows Program — the importance of training those who follow you, sharing with them the vision in action.”

Investing in Future Leaders

More than 100 contributors — foundations, higher education institutions, program alumni, and other individuals — share our view that support for the United Board Fellows Program is an investment in the future of higher education in Asia. We invite others to join us in encouraging strong leadership for Asian colleges and universities by making a gift in support of the United Board Fellows Program. Please contact Trudy Loo, Senior Manager for Development (tloo@unitedboard.org or 1.212.870.2612).

We also extend our appreciation to the more than 50 institutions that have hosted our Fellows. Thank you for your generosity and warm hospitality!



Punnoose Itty from Union Christian College in India (second from right) at Fu Jen Catholic University in Taiwan.

United Board Fellows Program

Lessons in Leadership

Dr. Sompan Wongdee

Dr. Sompan Wongdee is a 2006-2008 United Board Fellow and the first female president of Payap University. She reflects on what she learned through the United Board Fellows Program.



“I learned a lot about delegation, trust, and the role of empowerment. We have many competent individuals at the dean and academic administrator level at Payap University, fully capable of making key decisions

and assuming more responsibility. They should have the appropriate level of authority to make decisions. So when I came back from my second assignment, I delegated 18 tasks to the deans and encouraged them to delegate to their department heads. The result was that our administrative process moved much faster. Additionally, the deans and department heads enthusiastically accepted more responsibility and did their jobs with greater care.

“This is one of the important skills that I learned from my participation in the United Board Fellows Program. I hope that this program continues for a long time. I would like to see aspiring leaders benefit from this program just as I did.”

Dr. Mercy Pushpalatha

Dr. Mercy Pushpalatha, a 2002-2004 United Board Fellow and principal of Lady Doak College in Madurai, India, opened new doors for international exchange through her fellowship experience.



“There were a lot of challenges I faced inside the campus and outside the campus of my host institutions. Since I was in unfamiliar situations, I was forced to think proactively and outside the box.

I literally experienced the expression, ‘Necessity is the mother of invention.’

“My international experiences also helped me to realize the needs and expectations of international students, and hence I was able to introduce changes in the campus and in the curriculum at Lady Doak College. When I was at International Christian University in Japan, I got connected with Japanese students who wanted to come to India for service-learning. Similarly, when I was in the United States, I visited Mary Baldwin College, with whom my college later signed an agreement for a student exchange program. Till today these exchanges go on successfully!”

Learn More about the United Board Fellows Program

Visit our website:
www.unitedboard.org

Contact our program staff:
fellows@unitedboard.org

Consider a gift:
tloo@unitedboard.org

Sustainable Benefits from Tourism

Rith Sam Ol, Royal University of Phnom Penh

“Students and residents were eager to collaborate whenever possible.”

The village of Andong Reusey, located about 120 km from Phnom Penh, has been famous for the development of clay and ceramic pottery for thousands of years. More recently, it has become a stop for tourists interested in everyday village life. However, local residents felt they were experiencing few economic benefits from the increasing number of visitors to their community. For Rith Sam Ol, a senior lecturer at the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP), this dilemma created an opportunity for students in her community-based tourism (CBT) course to test newly acquired knowledge and skills.

Dr. Sam Ol wanted “to encourage our university program and students to develop a sense of social and environmental responsibility.” A grant from the United Board gave her and her colleagues the means to incorporate a service-learning dimension into the CBT course. A problem-solving approach, she believed, offered the best route to connect theory with practice and help students appreciate the need for “vulnerable and marginalized poor communities in resource-rich destinations to receive sustainable benefits from ecotourism, community-based tourism, or cultural tourism.”

During a needs assessment trip to Andong Reusey, Dr. Sam Ol was pleased to see the close interaction between students and residents. “They seemed to be able to understand each other well and were eager to collaborate whenever possible,” she said. Their discussions yielded a list of ways in which students could help, and teams were formed to work on legal registration of the CBT site with the Ministry of Tourism, raising awareness of CBT with local stakeholders, further study of current tourism products, and market mechanisms to increase sales.

What did students learn over the course of three months? In meetings with local and provincial authorities, oral histories with village elders, and outreach to tour operators, they learned that soft skills in communication are as important as theory and principles. Time and patience are needed to work through government registration processes. Sustained training is needed to turn good ideas into successful tourism practices. The students also recognized they have resources to share: they designed a promotional leaflet, set up a Facebook page, and invited community representatives to exhibit their products at a cultural festival on the RUPP campus.

One reason that service-learning appeals to students, Dr. Sam Ol finds, is that they want “to add value to their CVs.” Through her careful planning of this course, students also will bring values — such as integrity, compassion, and social conscience — to their future professions in tourism.



Rith Sam Ol, Senior Lecturer,
Royal University of Phnom Penh.

A New Class of Fellows

The United Board is pleased to announce that 19 young higher education leaders from 10 Asian countries and regions have been selected for the 2016-2017 United Board Fellows Program. The Fellows represent a wide range of academic disciplines and administrative experiences and share a commitment to strengthening teaching, learning, and administration in their institutions. Their exciting fellowship year gets underway on July 1.

Rith Sam Ol, featured on this page, is a member of the 2016-2017 United Board Fellows Program.

The Golden Age of My Life

Wutien Peng, Tunghai University

“Whole person education is not just academics.”



Wutien Peng, Tunghai University Class of 1962.

“I consider my time at Tunghai to be the golden age of my life,” Wutien Peng, a retired economics professor and member of Tunghai University’s Class of 1962 recalls. In fact, he found it such “a joy to learn and grow at Tunghai” that he never missed a single class during his four years on campus. It was a

stimulating environment for young learners, with small classes and top-notch professors who were “so effective in sharing challenging ideas with young minds,” he said.

Tunghai’s emphasis on whole person education created a lasting impression on Dr. Peng, one that guided him through his career as an economics professor at the University of Minnesota, the University of Wisconsin, and other institutions. “Whole person education is not just academics,” he explains. “It develops a complete person, who can focus on all aspects of life — intellectual, spiritual, professional — with good ethics.” Whole person education was embedded in the Tunghai curriculum, and the school’s requirements that students live in dormitories for four years and share responsibility for maintaining the campus helped develop valuable soft skills, like teamwork and knowing how to compromise.

Tunghai has grown from a small, pioneering college to a university with 17,000 students, but Dr. Peng believes whole person education remains important for its new generation of students. “Yes, students need technical skills,” he says, “but we can’t forget about other aspects

of growth.” During the six years he spent on the faculty at Tunghai, he encouraged economics majors to use their electives to explore other subjects. “All this makes a person more complete, rather than specializing in one thing.”

The United Board’s commitment to whole person education resonates with Dr. Peng. He also remains grateful to the United Board for its early support for Tunghai. For these reasons, he and his wife, Grace, are contributors to the United Board; their gifts are made in support of Tunghai University and the United Board Fellows Program. “I continue my support to the United Board,” he says, “because I want to improve the quality of education and serve the students of Taiwan and Asia and mankind.”



The Luce Chapel on the campus of Tunghai University.

Building a Charismatic Institution

Dr. (Fr.) Thomas C. Mathew, C.M.I., Christ University

“Sharing is a Christian call.”

College and university leaders typically focus on objectives, talent and skills, and financial resources when they develop strategic plans. Father Thomas C. Mathew, vice chancellor of Christ University in India, encourages these leaders to add another element to the list: charisma. “Higher education institutions in general, and Christian higher education institutions in particular, need to be charismatic institutions,” he said in a recent interview, drawing on the ideas of Ogburn (1966). This means more than placing a charismatic leader at the helm — it requires participatory decision-making. “Being a charismatic institution is a process of empowering all the institutional members and creating space for each member’s growth in terms of abilities inherent and acquirable.” He urges institutions to avoid outsourcing in favor of “building people within” and ensuring that employees are multi-skilled.

Ambition, he finds, is a key ingredient of a successful plan. “A strategic plan needs to be ambitious if an institution wants to stay relevant and progress at this time in human history, when socioeconomic shifts — and, consequently, institutional sustainability — are difficult to predict at the micro level.” Father Thomas Mathew’s ambition was to build a team that could transform Christ College into Christ University — a goal that was achieved in 2008. He described highlights of that experience in his keynote speech at the United Board’s Strategic Planning and Resource Development (SPRD) Workshop, held on January 25- 26 in Bangalore. (A second India workshop was held in Kolkata on January 28-29.)

Ambition needs to be balanced with pragmatism. For an institutional leader and his colleagues, this means translating a strategic plan’s theoretical framework into practical, constructive steps; in other words, determining “how it needs to unfold to bring about the desired changes and achieve the

goals.” As Father Thomas Mathew pointed out, “There should be clarity on short-term goals that will pave the way for long-term achievement.”

While the environment for higher education in Asia is increasingly competitive, Father Thomas Mathew believes colleges and universities can be generous with each other. “Sharing is a Christian call,” he said. “Since higher education is for the public good, colleges and universities should share their expertise.” Institutions should look for structured ways — workshops and training programs — and unstructured ways — facilitating visits — to share their ideas and models. “An institution can get inspired, or even evolve a model for itself, based on such sharing.”



Father Thomas Mathew, Vice Chancellor, Christ University.

Over many years of friendship, the United Board has been pleased to offer representatives of Christ University opportunities to offer and receive expertise, through the United Board Fellows Program, Asian University Leaders Program, Institute for Advanced Study in Asian Cultures and Theologies, and other programs.



Students on the campus of Christ University.

Connecting Goals to Resources

R. W. Alexander Jesudasan, Madras Christian College

“Fundraising is core to development.”

Alexander Jesudasan had been principal and secretary of Madras Christian College (MCC) for only a few months when he outlined his immediate goals at the United Board's 2010 Asian University Leaders Program. “Most of those aspirations have been accomplished,” he now finds, seven years into his presidency. At present, he and his colleagues are embracing a bigger challenge: implementing the strategic plan to guide MCC to its 200th anniversary in 2037.

MCC is already among the top ten liberal arts and science colleges in India, and recently the University Grants Commission awarded it the status of College with Potential for Excellence. Now Dr. Jesudasan is working in concert with his faculty, administrators, students, alumni, and donors to achieve a more ambitious goal. “We would like all of our departments to be number one in the country,” he said.

Early in its planning process, MCC convened a Planning and Development Council meeting so that nearly 200 representatives from the college's academic and administrative departments, extension programs, alumni

groups, and other interest groups could present their views. It established a smaller Central Committee to formulate a strategy. Working with these stakeholders has created a unity of purpose. “Their goals are my goals and my goals are their goals,” Dr. Jesudasan explains.

Making those goals a reality requires resources, and that need brought Dr. Jesudasan to the United Board's Strategic Planning and Resource Development (SPRD) workshop in February 2014 and brought him back again in February 2016. “Fundraising is core to development,” he said. “Once you are able to raise sufficient funds, you have the comfort level to begin to work seriously.”

At the 2014 SPRD, Dr. Jesudasan was intrigued by the presentation about the American Schools and Hospitals Abroad (ASHA) program, a grant-making program of USAID. Under the auspices of the United Board, MCC submitted a proposal to ASHA for a renewable energy project. The proposal envisaged a solar power facility on campus that would meet nearly 40 percent of the college's energy needs. Earlier this year, ASHA awarded a \$524,000 grant for the project.

Laying the groundwork for a successful strategic plan takes time, patience, and clarity, but those investments pay rewards along the way. Expressing his gratitude to the United Board, Dr. Jesudasan opines, “By supporting networks, the United Board nurses phenomenal changes in higher education.”



Alexander Jesudasan, Principal and Secretary, Madras Christian College.

Improving Campus Facilities

Since 1976, the United Board has received grants from USAID's American Schools and Hospitals Abroad (ASHA) program on behalf of eight Asian universities, helping them benefit from more than \$20 million in ASHA support. These funds have been used for classroom, dormitory, and laboratory construction; improving technology; and making campus facilities accessible to students with disabilities; and other projects. Visit the United Board website (www.unitedboard.org) for more information on this program.

A Respectful Spirit of Inquiry

Irving Domingo Rio, Central Philippine University

“I remind my students to think like indigenous people.”

“Students need to be engaged in discussions about local culture as part of their whole person education,” Irving Domingo Rio believes, and a grant from the United Board to Central Philippine University enabled this political scientist and mountain climber to turn his fieldwork in the Central Panay region of the Philippines into a teaching module on the conflict resolution practices of indigenous people.

“Many of my city-bred students have practically no knowledge about the existence of cultural communities in Central Panay,” he said in a recent interview. When Dr. Rio brings the history of retaliatory violence and the practice of *husay*, or nonviolent traditional conflict resolution, into the classroom, the information often is new to students. In addition, he finds, “political science and public administration students usually view conflict resolution in a highly legal context.” Learning about these indigenous practices gives students an opportunity to apply critical thinking to issues of law and governance. “I always



Dr. Rio's colleagues trekked into the mountains to study conflict resolution.

remind my students to think like indigenous people and imagine that they are living in a place where the presence of government apparatus is practically absent,” he says. In this environment, what role does “blood money” — compensation for loss of property, life, or honor — play and is this “way of the mountain” effective? How do such traditional practices align with the objectives of the national judicial system?



Irving Rio, Central Philippine University.

These questions, in turn, open up discussions about the rights of indigenous people and the laws designed to preserve cultural communities. “In order to truly evaluate the functionality of the Indigenous Peoples’ Rights Act, students must have adequate knowledge of the indigenous ways of life.” Interest in the course material is strong, and Dr. Rio is pleased that two student research groups plan further study on the Panay-Bukidnon people. He advises them to bring a respectful spirit of inquiry to their research. “You have to convince indigenous people that you are truly interested in learning their ways and honestly appreciate what you have learned from them.”

Dr. Rio and his two colleagues from the Department of Social Sciences spent 11 days trekking rugged terrain and crossing flooded rivers to gather material for their teaching module. Their strenuous efforts are now bearing fruit. “The United Board-funded project has created a strong sense of awareness among CPU faculty and students on the plight of indigenous people in the Central Panay,” Dr. Rio reports, and the CPU Center for Indigenous Studies was established last year. Dr. Rio encourages specialists in other disciplines to seek meaningful opportunities for learning in local communities because the culture of indigenous people offers “a reservoir of information.”

New Tools for Teaching and Learning

Zhang Yin, Ocean University of China

“Technology is the answer,
but what was the question?”

Zhang Yin was an undergraduate student when she first encountered the writing of Donald P. Ely, an expert in the field of educational technology. His words — “Technology is the answer, but what was the question?” — motivated Ms. Zhang to devote herself to exploring technological solutions to educational problems. Now, with the support of the United Board Faculty Scholarship Program, she is pursuing a PhD in educational technology at the University of Hong Kong.

One question that Ms. Zhang has encountered at her home institution, Ocean University of China in Qingdao, is how teachers can effectively engage their students. “Most students are digital natives, born in the information society,” she explains, and technology infuses their day-to-day lives. That creates a call to action for educators. “Teachers need to know how to communicate with students and provide support with the help of technology.”

Our Network

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Ms. Zhang describes some of the possibilities: “Technology can be a learning resource, such as an electronic book, or it can play a role as a tutor, through a question-answering system.” Technology also can create a learning tracing system for teachers, providing them with statistical data that helps them monitor their students’ learning and adjust their teaching approach accordingly.



Zhang Yin, Associate Professor,
Ocean University of China.

Ms. Zhang has found that both teachers and students are eager to use technology. However, she cautions that technology is not a substitute for an active learning environment. “Technology can improve teaching only when it is used for facilitating learning-centered practices, where students actively take part in learning, collaborate with each other in problem-solving, and team up with others to create innovative thoughts and products.”

Technology also creates ways to bridge geographical distances. Even while immersed in her PhD studies in Hong Kong, Ms. Zhang uses online platforms and resources to continue teaching some of her university students and to monitor the progress of her most important student, her young son, at home in Qingdao. “Technology can benefit students’ learning,” Ms. Zhang says, “no matter when and where it happens.”

Front cover photos:

Since 2002, United Board Fellows have been hosted by 55 colleges and universities, gaining knowledge and experience they can share with their home institutions.