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Linfield's Asian Reach

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Linfield’s Asian reach

Since the earliest days of its international programs, Linfield has forged connections with Asian counterparts — one relationship at a time. These human ties help Linfield students envision their future in an increasingly complex global society.

Rich historical ties

Linfield’s relationship with Asia, and with China specifically, dates to the 1930s. President Elam Anderson served as a missionary and school director in Shanghai and a number of students first came to Linfield as a result of his efforts. In the 1970s, President Charles U. Walker recognized the importance of expanding study abroad opportunities to Asia. He established Linfield’s first exchange program with Kanto Gakuin University in Yokohama, Japan, a partnership that continues to flourish. Walker also reinvigorated Linfield’s relationship with China in 1988, making connections with Chengdu University in Sichuan Province and Wenzhou University in Zhejiang Province. Today, Linfield boasts formal relationships with 12 universities in Japan, China and South Korea, a major in Japanese and minors in Japanese and Asian Studies, and is hosting 90 international students from Asia this year. The college has three tenure-track Asianist professors — Chris Keaveney, associate pro-

Asian partnerships

Japan
- Kanto Gakuin University, Yokohama
- Rikkyo University, Tokyo
- Aoyama Gakuin University, Tokyo
- Doshisha University, Kyoto
- Kyoai Gakuen College, Maebashi
- Kokugakuin University, Tokyo
- Shujitsu University, Okayama City

China
- Wenzhou University, Zhejiang Province
- Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong
- Sias International University, Xinzeng
- China Studies Institute, Peking University, Beijing

Korea
- Yonsei University, Seoul

The first semester class at KGU, fall 1980, front: Jason Myers ’83, Kathy Brown ’83, Sachiko Toda (KGU staff), Leanne Fricke ’83, Gerianne Hall ’82, Koichi Ito (KGU staff), Tatsuya Senuma (KGU staff). Back: Kevin McCallie ’81, Ross Sullivan ’82, Julie Powers, Roger Gano ’82, Susan Maben ’83, Brenda Williams ’82, Ava Maliner ’83, Julie Churchill ’82, Darryl Walker ’81, Brent Nomura ’82. Middle, far right: Shelly Sorensen ’83, Jim Flood ’83.
Learning to speak the language of business

Tal Edman ’10, right, with Chris Keaveney, discovered a different business culture during his semester abroad in Japan.

Tal Edman ’10 knows learning Japanese will give him an advantage in a world where Asian countries are becoming global economic superpowers. Edman, an international business major with Japanese and music minors, said his semester in Japan gave him a glimpse of the business world there. “There’s a completely different business culture in Asia,” he said. “It’s based on hierarchy and commitment to your employer.”

As Asian companies look for partners in the U.S. and American companies move into Asian markets, Linfield is preparing students for the transition. Keaveney’s advice to students, particularly those in business – study Chinese or Japanese. “All business is international business,” said Keaveney. “As companies look to expand and hire new people, they will look to those with Chinese or Japanese skills.”

Comparing teaching methods

Nancy Drickey, professor of education, spent the summer researching mathematics education at middle schools in the Japanese cities of Tokyo, Kyoto and Hiroshima, thanks to a grant from the ASIANetwork. She was joined in her research by student collaborators Marissa Davis ’09 and Amy Shoemaker ’09. They studied current trends in Japanese mathematics education and compared them with data from a national study conducted in the U.S. in 2003.

Professor of Japanese; Masa Itomitsu, assistant professor of Japanese; and John Sagers, associate professor of history — along with many colleagues who teach related courses. If society is indeed a decade into “the Asian Century,” Linfield is well placed to educate students to live and work in a global context.

Infusing Korean culture

Linfield incorporates Korean history and culture in a number of courses. In 2002, Chris Keaveney participated in a Korean summer seminar at the East West Center at the University of Hawaii, which culminated in a month-long stay at Seoul University. Ashley Price ’10, an economics and political science double major, is one of several students who have studied at Yonsei. Drawn to the strong political science program, she took a graduate course on North Korean foreign policy and recommends the program to other students, “especially if they are interested in working in Asia at any point, since Yonsei University is such an educational powerhouse.”

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A business presentation in Spain changed the trajectory of Tyler Laird-Magee’s career. Now an assistant professor of business at Linfield, Magee is passing on these hard-earned lessons to her students. “I got a very painful understanding of American myopia and how truly ethnocentric we are,” said Magee, who spent 28 years in the business world. “I didn’t understand the nuances in the cultures.”

She has since taught in China and focuses much of her Linfield instruction on the BRICs, the fast-growing emerging economies of Brazil, Russia, India and China. Globalization is touching U.S. businesses and workers who never expected to be dealing with Asia, she said. “Linfield’s focus on international programs and the connections we have here are truly life changing for the students,” she said. “It prepares them for the kind of world they will be working in.”
The key to longer life

Dawn Graff-Haight, professor of health education, led Linfield students on a three-week course to Japan in 2007. Students compared Japanese and American lifestyle and cultural factors, and examined differences between age groups that suggest trends that may impact longevity. Japan boasts the longest life expectancy in the world. Students presented their research at a symposium on longevity held in Tokyo. Key findings identified differences in dietary patterns, daily activity, health-care access, family/community connections and economic stability as factors influencing longevity.

Exploring quantum physics

Jim Diamond, professor of chemistry, spent the 2008-09 academic year and January Term 2010 in Beijing working in the lab of former student Jingsong Zhu ’93, now a professor of nanotechnology at the National Center for Nanoscience and Technology. In addition to participating in cutting-edge research within the lab, Diamond embraced the Chinese culture – he joined the Beijing International Festival Chorus, appeared in two TV commercials, studied the language and gained an appreciation for the challenges international students face.

Discovering Asian theatre

Janet Gupton, associate professor of theatre arts, published “Infusing Asian Theatre Forms into the Undergraduate Theatre History Class” in Northwest Theatre Review. She directed a bilingual production of A Corpse With Feet at Linfield, a Japanese absurdist piece chosen to be presented at the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival at the Northwest Drama Conference. Her research on feminism in plays by contemporary female Japanese playwrights was presented at the Association for Asian Performance in New York.

Sharing nursing expertise

As Chinese universities modernize nursing curricula, they are looking to institutions like Linfield as models. Vivian Tong, professor of nursing, and Michael Leahy, visiting health science professor, traveled to Nanning in south central China last fall to meet with peers at the Nursing School of Guangxi Medical University in Guangxi province. China is reflecting upon its future health-care challenges with an aging population, and health professionals realize that improved nursing practice will drive effective health-care delivery and improved patient care outcomes, Tong said.

Funding boosts programs

Funding from the Freeman Foundation of New York has transformed Asian Studies at Linfield. As a result of a grant in 2002, Linfield added a second tenure-track Japanese language faculty member. In 2008, China studies were boosted thanks to a second grant. Funding makes possible an annual visiting scholar from the China Studies Institute of Peking University. Qian Wang is this year’s instructor. It also provides faculty stipends focused on China to encourage Chinese-themed topics in Linfield courses and student travel grants. The grant launched a three-year series, China in McMinnville, which brings theatre productions, music events, lectures and more to Linfield. Last fall, virtuoso string ensemble Red Chamber performed.
International study:
A personal connection

Shaik Ismail has a personal understanding of international students who enroll at Linfield. Forty years ago, he traveled from his home in Malaysia to attend Beloit College in Wisconsin.

“It took me four days of flying on several planes to get there,” recalled Ismail, now the director of international programs at Linfield. “I was exhausted and disoriented when I arrived on campus. I remember how incredibly helpful and friendly my roommate was in helping me navigate the campus. To date, we remain close friends. That is the experience I wish for the international students we host. I want them to leave Linfield with more than a diploma in hand.”

In 2009-10, Linfield is hosting 90 students from Asia who are majoring in a variety of disciplines – the sciences, math, finance, international business and other areas. The number of international students studying at Linfield has steadily increased, thanks to the efforts of the Admission and International Programs Offices, which continue to foster important connections.

Since coming to Linfield in 2003, Ismail has focused his attention on adding new partner institutions and bringing cultural speakers and performers to campus.

“International students add veracity to classroom discussions, providing diverse opinions on numerous issues,” Ismail said.

“Many develop close bonds with staff, faculty and roommates in the years beyond Linfield. Our office bulletin board has an impressive collection of note cards, pictures and letters from alumni who left us decades ago. An alumnus in Beijing told me that he still retains lecture notes from his chemistry class at Linfield 15 years ago.”

Shaik Ismail
Director of International Programs,
Associate Professor of Political Science