From the Program Director: The Asian Studies Program at UVM had another fabulous year of exciting campus events in 2015, and our students continued to enrich their understanding of the Asian world through study abroad adventures across the region. This latest edition of our program newsletter offers a colorful glimpse of these many terrific opportunities for learning about the cultures of the Asian world in the College of Arts and Sciences at UVM. Enjoy! — Prof. Erik Esselstrom

The Marunouchi district of Tokyo as seen from the grounds of the imperial palace (formerly Edo castle of the Tokugawa samurai clan). Photo by E. Esselstrom

A tasty rice noodle dish enjoyed by Asian Studies major Travis DeForge during his stay in China. Read more about his adventures inside!

Above: Asian Studies majors Jonathan Heinrichs and Hannah Pike (with Prof Esselstrom), recipients of our 2015 Claire M. Lintelhac Award for Excellence in Asian Studies at UVM.
I am a junior at UVM and a double major in Chinese and Asian Studies. I am also a member of the Army ROTC program through which I traveled to China during the summer of 2015. Rather than a guided trip this program was unique in that it was dependent on total immersion into Chinese language and culture. From the first steps off of the plane in Shanghai we were forbidden to use English until we returned to the U.S. two months later. We all took intensive Chinese language classes for most of the work day and then experienced the culture and saw the sights in the evenings and weekends. With a population of nearly 14.5 million, Shanghai was a far cry from the towns of rural Vermont where I grew up.

I found two things most striking about the differences between Shanghai and large western cities: the efficiency of public transportation and the safety of the city. Although literally millions of people every day use the subway system to get around the city, I found it to be both efficient and incredibly clean. Compared to some subway stations in the United States, Shanghai’s were immaculate. And, although often cramped, I never once had to wait for another train due to one being full. The same was true regarding the cross-country passenger trains that I took from Shanghai to Beijing several times. In Shanghai, it is extremely expensive to obtain a city license plate for a personally owned vehicle. Consequently, there is a phenomenal public bus and taxi system that can bring you anywhere quickly, comfortably, and cheaply. Throughout my time there, and while utilizing all of these public services, my fellow students and I often discussed how safe we felt in the city. Even while exploring the Chinese nightlife there it was incredible how worry free both locals and tourists seemed in walking around the city.

During our two months in China we visited the Bund, the Pearl Tower, French Concession, numerous city markets, People’s Square, Silk Market, Forbidden City, Great Wall, Summer Palace, and even experienced the historic Dragon Boat festival. I learned a lot about the language, culture, politics, and beliefs of Chinese society during this trip, and I highly recommend visiting as it was truly a life changing experience.

The old Western Concession area of Shanghai
Student Adventures in Asia

Courtyard of the Temple of Heaven

The Great Wall

Exploring an old city market in Shanghai

Downtown shot of the Pearl Tower in Shanghai
Program Events in 2015

Ciara Ertle, a double major in Asian Studies and English, was awarded the highly prestigious Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship. The Gilman is a nationally competitive award given to accomplished students with financial need who wish to study abroad, and it seeks to support students as they prepare themselves to become active and engaged citizens in an increasingly globalized world. Ciara will use her award to study at Aoyama Gakuin University in Tokyo during the spring semester of 2016.

Left: Our 2015 graduating seniors in Asian Studies enjoyed a congratulatory lunch with Professor Esselstrom at one of downtown Burlington’s best Chinese restaurants, A Single Pebble.

Above: The UVM Taiko club continued to grow in 2015 and a new course in taiko drumming was also offered through the UVM Department of Music.

Left: Asian Studies minors Charlie Colfer, Sean Terry and Aaron Kane met up with Professor Esselstrom in the Shibuya district of Tokyo near the end of their one-year stay at Aoyama Gakuin University in July 2015.

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Program Events in 2015

A wide variety of provocative lectures by visiting scholars were organized, funded or co-sponsored by the Asian Studies Program and its faculty members throughout the year.

The Asian Studies Program also helped sponsor an amazing Lane Series concert performance by Chinese pipa virtuoso Wu Man and the Shanghai Quartet. Ten program students were given free tickets to this absolutely amazing musical event!
The Asian Studies Program recently made its third round of awards from the **Seybolt Faculty Fund in Asian Studies**, an endowment created in 2013 in memory of our kind friend, colleague and mentor of many years, Peter J. Seybolt. With their 2016 awards, Professor of Art History John Seyller and Professor of Religion Kevin Trainor will both travel to India to carry out research activity, while Associate Professor of Japanese Literature Kyle Ikeda will travel to Okinawa in support of his current project.

Jonah Steinberg and Emily Manetta took a summer 2015 research trip to India, where, following up on prior research on child runaways, Jonah made some fascinating new findings on remarkable intersections between certain tribal identities - sometimes decreed by colonial law - and the geography of homelessness in Delhi. Emily met with collaborators including Ayesha Kidwai at Jawaharlal Nehru University to finalize work on a special edited volume on the linguistics of South Asian languages. While in Delhi, Emily and Jonah also met up with recent Anthropology and Global Studies graduate Dan Rosenblum ’14, and UVM 2012 Research Scholar Khushboo Jain. Dan was just back from a trip to Kashmir and at the end of a rich and productive Fulbright year in India. Dan and Jonah explored field sites together, as Jonah experienced the unique thrill of finding a colleague in a former student. Khushboo and Emily explored her field sites in central Delhi and discussed her dissertation work on familial bonds and families on Delhi’s streets.

**Dinner in Delhi:** Dan Rosenblum, Khushboo Jain, and Jonah Steinberg share a meal in Hauz Khas in Delhi.

**Professor of Art History** John Seyller published a new volume in connection with his work on Indian painting.

Thomas Noel (top left), who graduated from UVM with a degree in Asian Studies in 2004, returned in 2015 with PhD in Chinese literature from the University of Wisconsin to teach in the Department of Asian Languages and Literatures.

Senior Lecturer in Japanese Kazuko Carlson coached several of her students in preparation for a Japanese language speech contest organized by the Vermont Association of Teachers of Japanese. The competition draws participants from universities and high schools around the state and UVM students performed very well in the 2015 contest. Alisha Lewis (left) took first place in the Superior level category and Kerey Hamilton (right) received the second place award in the Advanced level category.
Thomas Borchert, Associate Professor of Religion, traveled to Sipsongpanna (Xishuangbanna), a minority region in Yunnan Province, China to attend a forum in conjunction with the promotion of senior monks in the region. The forum itself was a first for the region, and was attended by both monks from China and Southeast Asia, as well as a number of Chinese academics. The day after the forum, five monks were promoted from Dubi (monk) to Khuba (teacher-monk), and the highest ranking monk in the region was promoted from Khuba to Pha-Somdet. This latter title is a bit hard to translate, and in fact somewhat out of place in the region. It is a royal title, used in Thailand to refer to both the eight senior monks in the kingdom and some high ranking members of the royal family. Although Sipsongpanna had a king prior to 1952, it has not had a king since then. Calling this monk Pha-Somdet, some of the monks in attendance said, was like reestablishing a sangha-raja, a “king” of the monastic community. This is a curious choice in a place like China that has tried to rid itself of feudal traces for most of the last sixty-five years. Yet the event had full official approval and support. The trip, supported in part through the Seybolt Faculty Fund in Asian Studies, provided Professor Borchert with the chance to interview monks on their attitudes about their place in the national community, a part of his ongoing research in both China and Thailand.