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ARTICLE

Learning New Methods, Teaching New Subjects: How Involvement in the Luce Initiative on Asian Studies and the Environment Changed Us as Teachers and Scholars

Joe Bowersox and Cecily McCaffrey

Willamette University, US

Corresponding author: Cecily McCaffrey (cmccaffr@willamette.edu)

The co-authors were drawn into studies of Asia and the Environment through the Luce Initiative on Asian Studies and the Environment (LIASE). Both developed new course material incorporating Asia and the Environment as complementary foci to their areas of expertise. Both made changes to curricular offerings and research trajectories, although pedagogical approaches and take-aways differed. The environmental scientist shifted understanding of the problems that comprise the subjects of environmental science and ethics toward a more global focus; the Asianist developed an appreciation for the importance of environmental studies methodologies tools in an historian's repertoire. In this essay, the authors evaluate their pedagogical strategies and reflect on the ways in which classroom experiences and LIASE programming have influenced their own trajectories as teacher-scholars.

Keywords: Asia; environment; pedagogy; interdisciplinary; curriculum

Introduction

In the fall of 2013, Willamette University launched “Sustainability and the Pacific Rim” (SPR), funded by the Luce Initiative on Asian Studies and the Environment (LIASE). Designed to enhance and link the University’s established commitments to environmental science, sustainability, and Asian studies, SPR emerged from a process that engaged students, faculty and administrators at Willamette and Tokyo International University (TIU). For over fifty years Willamette and TIU have had a formal educational partnership, including student, faculty, and administrator exchanges. Since 1989 they have cooperatively operated a permanent Willamette-based TIU campus: Tokyo International University of America. Building on this strong institutional partnership, SPR focuses on four key program activities: 1) curriculum and faculty development; 2) place-based learning in Japan; 3) place-based learning at Willamette’s field station, Zena Forest; and 4) symposia and workshops on Asia and environmental sustainability. Now in its sixth year, SPR continues to enhance the educational mission of both institutions and reinforce the bonds between the universities themselves.

The impact of SPR at Willamette has been broad and deep. Experiential programs – such as the place-based learning in Japan for Willamette students and in Oregon for TIU students – provide opportunities for intense and focused reflection on the intersection of cultural structures and environmental science for the student participants. Per the nature of the field schools, the programs are problem-based and invite multidisciplinary approaches to problem-solving. The broader curricular development initiatives have integrated Asian studies and environmental science content in a variety of courses at Willamette, in disciplines such as area/cultural studies, environmental science, economics, history, politics, and religious studies. These courses – whether in the form of discrete course offerings or modules embedded in preexisting courses – are part of the permanent curriculum of the university and as such will reach students far beyond the life of the grant.

In the following sections, we discuss two curricular initiatives that have sought to forge direct and meaningful connections between Asian Studies and Environmental Science: Bowersox’s integration of Asian Studies content in his introductory and

intermediate environmental science classes; and McCaffrey's development of an independent course on Asian environmental history. Although our perspectives differ, both of us have found that our embrace of new content and methodologies has led us to more holistic and integrative approaches to our subjects. We also discuss the ways in which our involvement in LIASE has influenced our research and professional development: materially engaging Asia and the environment as educators has inspired us to broaden our cultural, conceptual, and disciplinary horizons as scholars.

Pedagogy and Lessons Learned

As detailed below, in adapting and developing our teaching repertoires to embrace Asian Environmental Studies, we each took a different tack. McCaffrey created a new course that emphasized the methodological contributions of environmental studies; Bowersox integrated significant Asian Studies content into established courses. Although there are clear distinctions in our respective approaches and takeaways, there are also common lessons and outcomes. First, our courses emphasize the importance of comparative studies and approaches, particularly with respect to achieving a global perspective. As Bowersox notes in his discussion, a global perspective not only encourages students to consider environmental concerns in holistic terms, but it also serves to decenter and destabilize narratives that privilege Europe, North America, and even certain forms of scientific discourse. Similarly, McCaffrey addresses the importance of taking the long historical view in order to challenge presentist descriptions of human impact on the environment. Second, our courses utilize focused case studies in order to develop students' understanding of Asian environmental dilemmas. We have both striven to demonstrate the utility of well informed systemic thinking as the key to addressing pressing environmental problems.

Teaching Asian environmental history to undergraduates: pedagogy

SPR presented the opportunity for me (McCaffrey) to design a class in Asian Environmental history, a subject of long-standing interest but not one that I had engaged substantively either in my courses or in my scholarship. In structuring the

course, which is offered without prerequisites at the upper-division level, I decided that its design should mirror my own approach to the subject, namely, to consider the methodological contributions of an environmental history approach to understanding Asian history. With respect to course content, I was motivated by two concerns: first, that students consider both the pre-modern and modern eras and, second, that Asia be represented in broad terms. In addition to teaching students discrete narratives of Asian environmental history, I provide students the opportunity to engage their interest in contemporary environmental problems through an independent research project.

In terms of engaging students in a broad study of Asian environmental history, I have found it easier to include the *longue durée* and more difficult to provide broad geographic coverage of Asia – this in no small part due to the patterns of scholarship in the field of Asian environmental history and to the needs of an undergraduate classroom. In repeated iterations of the course, I have divided the semester almost equally between the pre-modern and modern periods, but have of necessity focused exclusively on East Asia (which, I should note, is also my area of specialization). Topically, in three iterations of the course, our studies have engaged environment and economy, environment and colonialism, environment and modernity, environment and war, environment and science, and environment and globalization (Marks 1998; Morris-Suzuki 2013; Muscolino 2015; Peckham 2015; Perdue 2013; Schmalzer 2016; Shapiro 2001; Walker 2001, 2005; Weller 2006). The role of states in influencing environmental history is a constant theme, as is the epistemological shift that accompanies the onset of modernity in East Asia and influences human conceptions of the natural world (see Elvin 1993; Mason 2012). I deliberately assign historical monographs as opposed to a textbook in order to allow students to gain mastery over discrete subjects and thereby invest in the course and its content. In my experience, close topical studies facilitate student appreciation for the relevance of context, circumstance, and contingency in understanding causation.

The class attracts students from a variety of disciplines and programs, including Asian Studies, Environmental Science, History, and International Studies. Accordingly, the first question we address as a class is: “what is environmental history?” I use articles by J.R. McNeill (2003) and Douglas Weiner (2005) to set the stage with

respect to the historiographical trends and the temporal and geographic scope of the field. To answer the question, “what is Asian environmental history?,” I assign the students a journal review, wherein they survey the most recent ten years of either *Environmental History* or *Journal of Asian Studies*, classify dominant trends in the journal, and identify Asian Environmental scholarship as represented in the journal. The utility of the exercise is that it clearly demonstrates to students the ways in which present-day concerns influence scholarly inquiry as well as acquaints them with the scope of secondary sources in the field – information which they can build upon in designing research projects later in the course.

In order to train the students to recognize the distinctive elements that comprise the methodology of environmental history, I ask them to write essays on the monographs we have read that not only build analytical skills but also serve to develop critical skills in assessing the utility of discrete approaches to historical subjects. For example, in analyzing an historical work that highlights the intersection of ecology and culture, students are required to explain the ways in which the author constructs the argument as well as explain the causal relationship between contributing factors and historical outcomes – and in so doing, the student is obligated to explain how, in this telling, ecology relates to culture (and vice versa).

In the second half of the semester, students work on an independent research project focusing on a contemporary or historical problem relating to the environment in Asia. The broad temporal scope allows the students to follow their particular interests, independent of the scholarly limits of the field of Asian Environmental History. Students may pursue topics that encompass Asia in broad geographical terms: to date, their projects have focused on South, Southeast, and East Asia and have included topics ranging from palm oil plantations to trafficking in wild animal parts to desertification. The design of the assignment has the student focus on defining a particular environmental problem and identifying different approaches to the problem, thereby maintaining a focus on methodology. In order to keep attention on environmental history methodology in particular, students working on contemporary issues are asked to conclude their analysis by highlighting the potential contributions of an environmental history approach to understanding

and/or resolving the problem. In the process, students learn about the critical contributions of environmental history as a discrete approach – and often learn about the considerable overlap in disciplinary methods by consequence.

Teaching Asian environmental history to undergraduates: reflection

Student responses to the course have significantly influenced my teaching as well as my understanding of environmental history—I revise each iteration of the class with their perspectives in mind. In responding to student learning in the course, I pay attention to two measures: first, student receptivity to the content and concepts presented in the course; second, student ability to execute the skills requisite to successful completion of class assignments. Here I focus primarily on the first measure, as student responses to the course material have substantially influenced my own thinking about Asia and the environment. The most basic method for tracking student receptivity is attending to the pattern and flow of discussion: the course is conducted as a seminar and all students must assist in leading a day's discussion. In addition, I routinely ask students to free-write responses to assigned readings as well as to complete an informal evaluation (separate from the formal course assessment) wherein they highlight the main takeaways of the course for them personally. While each class differs in their attention, there have been consistent refrains in our discussions that have proven to be key in terms of shaping my presentation of Asian environmental history.

In the first place, students are clearly affected by the “declensionist tendency” in the field of environmental history. Per McNeill, students often seem to understand the story of the environment as “just one damn decline after another” (2003, 35). While I originally adopted a problem-solving approach as an expedient means of organizing the course, I have kept it in order to provide a proactive retort to the declensionist narrative. As I strive to explain to my students, history's exploration of the laboratory of humanity helps create a “to think” list of different factors needing consideration when confronting problems on a global scale. Furthermore, I find that focusing on the *longue durée* provides a needed corrective to the dominant narratives of the Anthropocene by challenging nostalgic views of an imagined past of pristine

human-nature interactions. For example, when students read Robert Marks' *Tigers Rice Silk and Silt: Environment and Economy in Late Imperial South China* (1998), a work which spans almost two millennia of history, they learn that technological development, commercial expansion, population growth, and state welfare are all inextricably intertwined and all bear on the human role in environmental change and degradation. Understanding the long-standing implications of human society on this planet engenders a recognition that broad systemic change is demanded to resolve the environmental crisis.

Another critique of environmental history from my students is that these narratives are anthropocentric as opposed to ecocentric. On the one hand, their comments provide an opportunity to discuss the nature of historical sources and the people who create them. At the same time, the students point to an important lacuna: these histories are often one-way, humans are subjects and nature is object. My solution is to follow Weiner's inclusive definition of the field (2005, 415–417); I find that adopting a “big tent” approach to environmental history – arguing for the validity of multiple forms of inquiry – highlights the crucial intersection of environmental history (read: the significance of the environment) with all historical aspects: social, cultural, political, economic, intellectual, etc. While this approach does not resolve the anthro-eco dichotomy, it does give credence to human perspectives without denying the importance of an eco-/enviro-/natural perspective.

Because the assignments for the course reinforce the importance of multi-factor analysis and instruct the students to differentiate between disciplinary approaches, my efforts to better structure and stage these assignments in subsequent iterations of the course contribute to the realization of the conceptual points I describe above. In their end of semester reflections, students affirm the importance of examining environmental problems from multiple perspectives and note that they have learned to question single-factor explanations for environmental decline. Teaching the course has likewise heightened my own appreciation for interdisciplinary inquiry and simultaneously provided me with a more holistic understanding of Asian history. As a result, my approach to my courses has shifted to accommodate environmental

perspectives, leading me to incorporate new course material and new lecture content into lower division courses on East Asian civilization and the Pacific War, for example. Accordingly, I can affirm that learning to teach Asian environmental history makes me a better Asianist.

Incorporating Asian studies content into environmental science courses: pedagogy

Within environmental science curricula one often sees a focus on introducing undergraduate students to fundamental biotic and abiotic processes, environmental risks and hazards, and management strategies and responses. Particularly at the introductory level, social, political, cultural, and ethical drivers and implications are often addressed in a single chapter or limited to qualitative anecdotes or inserted textboxes (see, for instance, Hassenzahl et. al., 2017; Miller and Spoolman 2019). Even though environmental science as a field embraces “interdisciplinarity,” it often reflects the traditional physical and life sciences preoccupation with empiricism and hard evidence, shunning context and interrogation of bias and values.¹ At Willamette, we have been trying to counter this trend, transforming our introductory course from a single semester experience to a full year sequence in which systems theory unites our discussion of both ecological and social processes.

In order to meet SPR objectives, the Environmental Science department has incorporated Asian studies content relevant to specific topics within the introductory course sequence, taught by all members of the department. Here I (Bowersox) focus on the first course in the sequence, in which we consciously start with a systems theory approach, linking natural and social systems explicitly. The course is often team-taught, with a mixture of lecture, small group work, and external enrichment requirements; enrollment is limited to first and second year students. The systems focus facilitates organization around not only particular ecological patterns and processes, but also interacting socio-economic, political, and cultural patterns and

¹ This is increasingly reflected in departments and programs now delineated as “environmental science” and “environmental studies,” severely undermining the interdisciplinary assumptions exhibited in the early years of academic development.

processes. Incorporating Asian environmental issues and concerns in systems analysis prevents the course from focusing solely on American and European perspectives, and also offsets positivist viewpoints. One illustrative example is when we examine water resources, we move from simply utilizing North American data and examples to incorporating examples from China and Japan. Students spend two weeks comparing the physical and socio-cultural context of development and diversion of the Colorado River and the Yellow River, respectively, examining comparative ecological impacts, associated political conflict, and policy responses. When examining contemporary solutions to water quantity and water quality issues, students explore sponge cities in China, green roofs in Japan, and bioswales in Oregon with insights coming from research articles, video documentaries, and fieldwork. Environmental dilemmas—and environmental responses—thus are not merely North American concerns but global in scope and a shared predicament faced by communities throughout the Pacific Rim. Limiting the course to first and second year students facilitates our SPR strategy of reaching students early, encouraging development of a more global and contextualized environmental understanding. As such, this course has served as a major gateway for our summer field school, with nearly half of the participants coming directly from this class.

Several upper division courses in our Environmental Science curriculum continue the emphasis on Pacific Rim-focused globalization, ranging from lab courses on Climate Change to Environmental Health. I will use one of my seminar courses as an example. For years, the advanced course in Environmental Policy focused on domestic policy patterns and processes, going global only to look at certain North American policy connections to international treaties (for example, biodiversity protection, trade in hazardous waste, climate change, etc.). SPR challenged me to fundamentally rethink my objectives for the environmental policy course and more thoroughly understand the benefit of comparative perspectives in policy formation and decision making. Now, when looking at air quality, we examine not only the evolution of the issue in North America (from 19th century municipal public health concerns to the Clean Air Act's use in climate change mitigation) but also in China, where air quality concerns similarly reach from municipal particulate exposure and

ground level ozone to global climate change (see Matus et al. 2012). Both China and US air quality dilemmas demonstrate the parallel impacts of industrialization, a developmentalist ideology, and the problems of balancing regional and national economic growth with environmental limits. Agricultural policy offers fruitful comparisons as well: students examine the North American Dust Bowl of the 1930s and responses (including agricultural policies that continued to exacerbate soil and water quality as well as social inequality) in tandem with the impacts of Maoist agricultural policies on the Loess Plateau and efforts over the last three decades to address deleterious ecological and social effects (Chen et. al. 2010). In addition to primary research articles and government reports, documentary films provide necessary historical context and visual evidence (Liu 2012). While noting the very different social and political contexts of the two case studies, examining them together demonstrates a very common dilemma of agricultural modernization in which policies directed at short term increases in production undermine long term sustainability. In the final weeks of the course students take up the issue of sustainability directly and examine the impact of large state-sponsored and multinational corporations upon resource pools, global supply chains, and labor in Asia and North America, and explore the extent to which third party certification, corporate social responsibility, and green consumerism can address declining state capacity or willingness to regulate (Marquis and Qian 2014; Dauvergne and Lister 2012). By examining contemporary environmental policy across the Pacific Rim in comparative context, students confront directly the limitations both of state action and market mechanisms. They are forced to consider how entangled our political institutions are with corporate bodies dependent upon resource extraction, manufacturing, and production, and how problematic this situation is for creating a more sustainable future.

Incorporating Asian studies content into environmental science courses: reflection

As my co-author notes above, teaching about the environment can be exceedingly depressing, and this is often reflected in the looks of despair upon the faces of our students in the classroom. In fact, one could look at the incorporation of examples

from other countries around the Pacific Rim as intensifying the despair, as students confront what appears to be environmental decline, degradation, and destruction throughout the region and around the globe. This use of comparative examples could even reinforce pre-existing cultural and political biases in our students: “if we think air pollution is bad in Los Angeles, well, just look at Shanghai....” There may be inherent risks in expanding the gaze of a particular class beyond a more traditional and familiar content that we as teachers can nuance more satisfactorily. But, after six years of experience, there are reasons why I think this is incorrect.

First, as noted earlier, environmental science has been criticized as overly positivist and perhaps *too* ecocentric, marginalizing human social and cultural impacts, ignoring disproportionate consequences, and inappropriately homogenizing responsibility for environmental degradation (Robbins 2011). Incorporating environmental history, comparative case studies, and policy examples from around the Pacific Rim allows our environmental science program to demonstrate the importance of a truly “decentered” systems approach. Environmental analysis must look to local condition and context; indeed, context is perhaps the first lesson of systems theory in environmental science. The causes of local and regional environmental degradation and overexploitation are complex, often involving the historical distribution of power and status, cultural and religious values, economic conditions, and external political pressures, among other factors. Local and regional responses to environmental challenges are similarly influenced by many factors. Connections matter. Thus, comparative analysis can help students to recognize that in many contexts, arguments for environmental conservation, mitigation, and restoration may require decidedly human-centered arguments focused on benefits to often marginalized human groups and communities.

A systems approach that incorporates a Pacific Rim focus also helps us to be better environmental scientists: many patterns, processes, and cycles do not respect regional or national boundaries, whether they be biogeochemical cycles like carbon or nitrogen, disturbance patterns like invasive species, or global socio-economic processes (central bank rates, international tariffs, labor migration) that affect resource utilization and exploitation. Golden snails imported to Taiwan as a food

source soon become invasive (Tsai et al. 2016); interest rate changes in the United States correlate to more timber exported to Japan (Daniels 2005); coal mined and burned in Shaanxi produces particulate deposited in the Sierra Nevadas (Lin et. al. 2017). Such examples demonstrate to students our interconnectedness across spatial and temporal scales: John Muir's aphorism, "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe," takes on more immediate and visceral relevance (Muir 1990 [1911]).

Finally, incorporating a Pacific Rim focus affords students an important opportunity to examine promising policies and solutions for broader application at a variety of scales. Efficient high-speed mass transit, hard to envision in most communities in Western North America, thrives throughout Japan and South Korea, and is growing rapidly in China (Kasulis 2017). Renewable energy development proceeds apace in China, South Korea, and North America, but lags in Japan (see Negishi 2016). Using concrete and rebar to address water scarcity and water quality has given way to more ecological and sustainable methods in both China and North America, from the use of artificial wetlands for wastewater treatment to pervious pavement, bioswales, and vegetated roofs to deal with stormwater run-off (Chan et. al. 2018). Examining local and national responses to such issues across the Pacific Rim helps students to recognize that most environmental dilemmas have multiple available solutions. Nevertheless, the choices of available solutions in a given social, cultural, and political context may be bracketed by additional variables in need of exploration and understanding. Thus, systems-based comparative analysis ultimately produces students that are better equipped to address the wicked problems we face locally, regionally, and beyond.

Growing as Teacher-Scholars

Our involvement in LIASE has significantly influenced our professional development. We both have been involved in the design and implementation of SPR (Bowersox is co-director of the program; McCaffrey serves on the steering committee) together with our colleagues in Asian Studies and Environmental Science, all of whom are active participants in and supporters of the project. In addition to our efforts in the classroom, we have taught together in the field school in Japan as well as planned

campus-wide programming (lecture series, symposia). All of these experiences have broadened our intellectual horizons, exposing each of us to new ideas as well as the benefits of working collaboratively across disciplinary lines.

Teaching in the summer field school in Japan, an intensive experience for both students and faculty involved, has been particularly inspiring. This program, “Sustainability in Japan,” runs for three weeks at the TIU campus in Kawagoe; it combines language training with seminar-style instruction and field trips and service work in the community. Language instruction is provided by the staff of TIU; the seminar and field exercises are led by two Willamette faculty, one from Asian Studies and one from Environmental Science. Thanks to the assistance of our collaborators at TIU, we have been able to integrate the language instruction, seminar sessions, and field trips quite closely. For example, in preparation for a field visit and service work at the Ranzan Forest Trust in Saitama prefecture, students learn vocabulary to identify native foliage and insects in their language class and discuss the concept of “satoyama” in seminar (Knight, 2010); on site, students work with volunteers at the forest trust to learn the landscape as well as assist in conservation efforts. The experience of collaborating with colleagues in different disciplines and in different institutions as well as learning alongside our students in language classes and in the field has been rewarding. It has also challenged us to reimagine what we do in the classroom and in our scholarship.

In the following discussion, we reflect on the ways in which we have developed our professional trajectories as a result of our involvement in SPR. Just as we have sought to educate our students on the benefits of global vision and multidisciplinary inquiry, we ourselves have embraced new methodologies, sought to expand our subject knowledge, and adopted new conceptual frameworks in designing research projects. Without question, SPR has been a positive influence on our growth as teachers and scholars.

For the Asianist

Considering the multi-modal model inherent to works of environmental history — and its contribution to holistic ways of thinking about the past and its relationship to the present — has ultimately challenged me (McCaffrey) to become more creative in

my approach to my research on the social history of late imperial China. While I have always been interested in local history, which promotes a comprehensive study of place, since delving into environmental history I have become increasingly interested in geographies as models for understanding culture — as expressed in a discrete moment in the past and as employed as a framework for understanding the past. That is to say, I am beginning to think about geographies as both spatial and temporal influences on history. While this may not be the most novel observation, for me it represents an invitation to expand the scope of my local history focus with respect to considering human interactions with natural space in particular. After my experience teaching environmental history, I now consider it imperative to investigate the natural environment as both a physical and cultural element of history.

Whereas teaching about environmental history methodology has challenged me to reconsider my own approach to the past, the experience of working and learning together with students in the summer field school has also led me to reconsider the tools of my trade. I now take a broader perspective on the strategies I use in the classroom as well as the sources I use in my research. For example, when planning or revising my courses, I strive to incorporate experiential components that are well integrated with the class as a whole. In addition, in order to develop a better sense of how understandings of space and place change over time I have turned to published folklore and also have begun to explore training in oral history methodology. Finally, I have also begun to delve into contemporary ecological research on the regions I study in order to better understand the intersection of environmental and human history (my own attempt to bridge the anthro-eco divide). In sum, my visions of the scale of the classroom in which I teach and the scope of the history that I write have been greatly expanded due to my participation in SPR.

For the environmental scientist

SPR has slowly but surely transformed my (Bowersox) professional development and research trajectory. My own professional arc started with a significant comparative component (North America, Europe, and Asia) but that trend was sidetracked early in my career as I moved more firmly into the world of environmental science.

Fortuitously, SPR coincided with my own desire for greater integration of the social and the physical as opposed to the displacement of the former by the latter. Over the past six years I have returned to language study, developed a new transnational project on sustainable forestry, and am incorporating Asian environmental thought into a book length manuscript on normative environmental values. Each development can be connected to SPR. First, learning alongside our students in the summer field school has rekindled a desire to achieve the cultural and social insight that language competency affords. Second, teaching and learning about historical and contemporary Japanese forest management has exposed me to the parallel dilemmas faced by both Japanese and North American small scale family foresters in maintaining economic and ecological viability. This insight drives a multi-year research project comparing family forest operations in Japan, the U.S., and Germany. Finally, working with my Asian studies colleagues at Willamette and faculty at TIU has exposed me to the environmental implications of Dōgen's Zen philosophy as well as to the protest, activism, and emerging environmental philosophy of Tanaka Shozo (Stolz 2006). This exposure has influenced my work on a book-length manuscript on environmental values engaging the dilemmas posed (and I believe misconceived) by writers from the Deep Ecology and Religious Naturalism movements.

Concluding Thoughts

Asian Studies and Environmental Science share common ground. Both fields promote interdisciplinary inquiry and multidisciplinary approaches. At Willamette, both programs promote the mastery of varied skill sets as well as the acquisition of content knowledge from a range of subject fields. The distinctive elements of each – for Asianists, the emphasis on intercultural competency; for Environmental Scientists, the emphasis on systems thinking – are neatly combined in Asian Environmental Studies. A strong foundation in systems thinking allows for robust problem solving as well as important critical perspectives on past, present, and future challenges. The multidisciplinary approach of Asian Studies complements the natural-social foci of environmental science; the addition of intercultural awareness offers the possibility of envisioning creative alternatives to (inherently) culturally defined approaches.

Both of us have experienced the benefits of crossing disciplinary and subject boundaries: we agree that our involvement in SPR has enhanced the work we do as teachers and scholars. We believe that our students have likewise benefited. On our campus, we have seen an increase in students integrating Asia and the Environment in their coursework, a trend reflected in decisions to add majors or minors, in enrollment in Asian language classes, and in subscriptions to study abroad programs at TIU in particular. Less tangibly, but saliently, we have seen our students respond intellectually to the modes of inquiry that are inherent in the SPR program. After six years of collaboration, we are confident that the connections we have made between the Asian Studies and Environmental Science programs – and the positive outcomes those have produced – will live on well past the grant period.

The achievements of SPR have been dependent on key factors: first, institutional support and institutional flexibility have been crucial to the development and execution of the program. The commitment of university administration has been a necessary cornerstone to the project. At Willamette, a strong tradition of faculty collaboration as well as curricular flexibility has allowed faculty to adapt their courses to meet SPR goals. At TIU, faculty colleagues and administrators have been accommodating and supportive of SPR aims; their involvement has guaranteed the success of the summer field schools. Generous funding from the Luce Foundation has incentivized faculty and student participation as well as covered necessary administrative costs. The strengths of the program also signal potential limitations, however. Curricular constraints have impeded the extension of SPR initiatives in the physical and life sciences. The demands of the tenure track have also limited the participation of junior faculty who are committed to established research programs. Economic demands on students, who often need to find summer employment, affect the long-term viability of the summer field schools in particular. Finally, the resilience of liberal arts colleges in the face of significant challenges – financial, social, and cultural – influences all of the above.

Acknowledging the positive effects of the LIASE effort while being cognizant of the systems that support effective implementation of programs such as SPR leads us to our final reflection: in our experience, the effort, risk-taking, and

negotiation necessary to promote interdisciplinary collaboration is well worth the cost. At the same time, we recognize the ongoing challenge of supporting these efforts in uncertain times and look forward to applying our shared wisdom to future progress.

Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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