



A4P Reunions Event 2012

A Summary of the Update on Asian American Studies at Princeton and Alumni Participants' Response

Our Reunions event this year featured Anne Cheng '85, Professor of English and African American Studies at Princeton University, and students Charles Du '13 and Tara Ohrtman '13 who updated us on the status of Asian American Studies at Princeton. This is a brief summary of the update and the suggestions offered by the alumni participants.

Students and alumni have been asking the University for Asian American Studies (AsiAm) since the 1970's. There were courses given and promises made from time to time but no coherent program ever developed. Since her arrival on campus in 2006, Professor Cheng has been approached by graduate and undergraduate students and alumni about developing some sort of AsiAm program. To begin satisfying this demand for AsiAm, Professor Cheng has reached out to the administration. In 2008, with the support of other faculty members, Professor Cheng sent a letter to the administration proposing a certificate in AsiAm to be housed within the Program in American Studies (AMS) - <http://www.princeton.edu/ams/>. Over 600 alumni signed a petition to support her proposal. Unfortunately, the administration did not respond. In 2009, Professor Cheng continued her efforts by organizing a day long symposium with faculty and administration about AMS's possible role in providing a home for the interdisciplinary study of the history and contributions of Asian Americans, Latino Americans, and Native Americans. (African American Studies is already housed in the Center for African American Studies.) There was faculty support for this concept. However, the administration was neutral - it did not reject the concept but did not offer any funding which is necessary because AMS does not have its own faculty. As the program is interdepartmental, it draws its faculty from the departments of Anthropology, Architecture, Art and Archaeology, Economics, English, History, Music, Philosophy, Psychology, Religion, Sociology, and the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. Having current faculty teach AsiAm would require dedicated funding to pay for additional faculty to redistribute teaching loads.

Still hopeful that in the future Princeton will house an AsiAm certificate program in American Studies, Professor Cheng earlier this year proposed a series of five introductory and topical courses and a website through the 250th Anniversary Fund for Innovative Teaching as a plan to set the foundation for the future growth of AsiAm. After thoughtful consideration, the administration will only fund one of the five courses but may fund more in the future. The proposal for the website was denied. A major reason for the Administration's hesitance to accept Professor Cheng's entire proposal is fear of lack of student demand. It is apparent that the Administration is not against AsiAm but does not want to make the full investment on its own.

Charles Du '13 and Tara Ohrtman '13 also reported on their activities to develop AsiAm. As members of the Asian American Students Association, they lead the AsiAm committee which the association has deemed a priority. Since there were no AsiAm courses last year, Charles Du '13 made the effort to lead a student run reading group. From year to year since Professor Cheng's arrival, there have been individual courses offered on AsiAm topics but they are not offered regularly or marketed to students as being part of an AsiAm effort. This situation makes it difficult for students to plan ahead to take courses in or related to AsiAm.

Professor Cheng and the students' update stimulated a strong response from the alumni in the audience during the Q and A. Following is a list of suggestions and action possibilities, all to be done in a staged sustainable manner.

- A4P needs to show persistence in its support of the development of AsiAm at Princeton.
 - o Continue to contact and visit administration and confirm continued support.
 - o Via its website, A4P can offer individual alumni a chance to sign any future written communication to the administration regarding AsiAm.
 - o Continue to collaborate with students and faculty to seek resources for AsiAm.
- A4P can continue to build the constituency that supports AsiAm by
 - o Continuing to inform graduate and undergraduate alumni about the case for AsiAm and its current progress and obstacles.
 - o Using various methods of communication – newsletters, social media, A4P website, providing speakers to travel and meet alumni across the country and abroad.
 - o Collecting testimonials from former students who took AsiAm courses on campus.
 - o Videotaping interviews of students articulating their reasons for wanting AsiAm.
 - o Videotaping AsiAm classes and student participation.
 - o Videotaping film clips of other notable AsiAm activity – conferences, speakers, exhibitions.
- A4P can begin fundraising by setting up 2 accounts at PU's Development office. A4P can encourage alumni who support AsiAm to donate to the funds.
 - o Fund I – for an endowment to fund a Chair of Asian American Studies within the Program in American Studies. This would provide for a permanent position within the Program in AMS for a professor dedicated to AsiAm. (About \$5,000,000)
 - o Fund II – for a replenishable spending account to pay for other expenses of an AsiAm program (about \$500,000):
 - § Visiting faculty
 - § Incentives such as summer grants for current Princeton faculty to develop courses for AsiAm. There are currently several faculty members who are capable of teaching courses in AsiAm but need resources.
 - § Research grants for undergraduate and graduate students and fellows.
 - § Guest speakers.

§ Seminars and conferences for faculty, students, and alumni.

§ Administrative support, particularly to update an AsiAm section of the AMS website.

Example: American Jewish Studies has a section on the AMS website –

http://www.princeton.edu/ams/american_jewish_studies/

§ Having a website presence will serve to inform students and faculty of available resources for AsiAm at Princeton and of activity in other institutions.

· Research and Collaborate with AsiAm Supporters outside the Princeton University Community

- o Study the success of other schools. For instance, within the past few years Harvard Asian American alumni have successfully funded an endowed chair of Ethnic Studies which now has a dedicated professor for its program. Harvard alumni have also successfully established a spend down fund for visiting faculty. Alumni may donate to the spend down fund by designating “Ethnic Studies” when they donate to Harvard. Princeton alumni who support AsiAm need to study the effort of Harvard Asian American alumni and determine how we can achieve similar fund raising goals to establish a program in AsiAm within the Program in American Studies.
- o Survey PU student demand to give evidence of interest to administration.
- o Record enrollment and student testimonials of future AsiAm classes at Princeton.
- o Survey the status of AsiAm at peer schools.

The Case for Asian American Studies (AsiAm)

The field of AsiAm has developed from its birth in the late 1960’s as an outgrowth of the Civil Rights movement to become an interdisciplinary field studying the impact and influence in America of the many Asian groups who have immigrated to the US, especially since the major change in immigration laws in 1965. Evolving beyond the traditional topics of history, race, and assimilation, there are now other topics ranging from performance arts to public policies that need to be crafted to address the needs of the Asian American community. This is especially important given the recent Pew study that reports Asians have surpassed Hispanics in immigrating to the US.

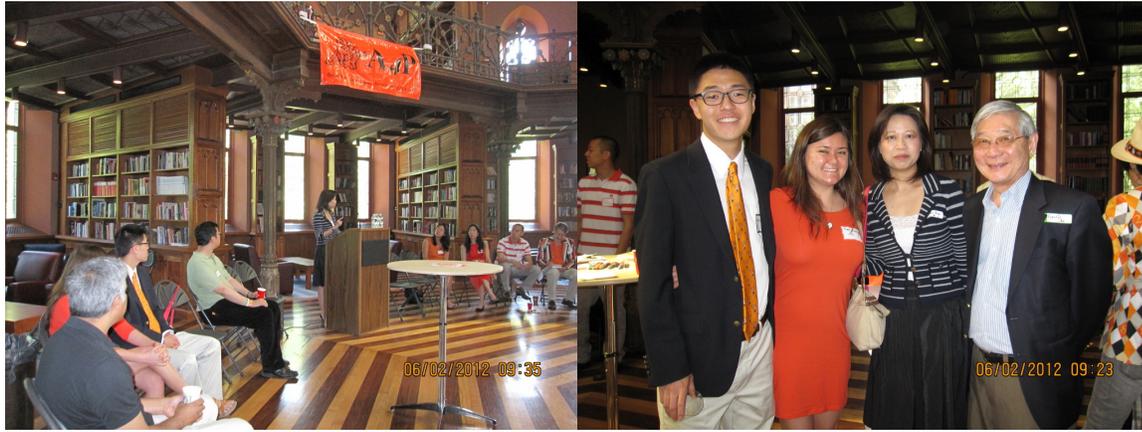
Today many Asians are transnational, flying back and forth from their home countries to the US for business and education. China and India have become major world players and many of their citizens are as at home in the US as they are in their own countries. Asian Americans keep a keen eye on the quality of US relations with their former countries of origin as it is a major determinant of their treatment in America. There is now respectful and mutual exchange of cultural and other information between Asia and mainstream America. Indeed, AsiAm is relevant to all Americans who would like to understand and appreciate how Asian Americans and Asian transnationals are influencing their country domestically and internationally.

As for Princeton alumni who support AsiAm, the academic case is clear to us. Moreover we want the administration to recognize our presence and contribution to Princeton University. The population of students of Asian heritage, undergraduate and graduate, has increased dramatically over the years. There are also alumni and students of mixed races. And there are alumni in interracial relationships and alumni who adopt children from East and South Asia. An AsiAm program housed in the Program of American Studies would show alumni Princeton recognizes and appreciates this segment of the Princeton community.

Photos Below:

(L) Professor Anne Cheng '85 speaking at A4P Reunions Saturday

(R) Charles Du '13, Tara Ohrtman '13, Anne Cheng '85, and Frank Odo '61



In **Orange** and Black,

The Officers and Governors of A4P

Questions? Please contact Mo Chen '80 at A4PMoChen@gmail.com.

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To learn more about A4P, please visit us at <http://www.a4princeton.org/>

Tigernet. From time to time we may post event information for non- Princeton related organizations on the **Asian Alumni Forum** discussion list on TigerNet. Please sign up at www.alumni.princeton.edu if you haven't already.

A4P Addlist Instructions: If you know an alumnus/a who is not receiving the A4P email newsletters and would like to be added to the list, email: name, affiliation (i.e. class of 2001), email address to Doug Chin '83 at a4psocal@gmail.com, cc: Mo Chen '80 at a4pmochen@gmail.com and put in the subject line: "**A4P Addlist**". We will verify requestors and include them in future emails. Please make sure the alumnus/a is not already receiving the emails before submitting a request. Thank you.

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