Asian Crisis Continues

Long-term Solutions for International Students

Although the economic crisis that swept Asia last year may seem like old news to many, the aftermath continues to affect many Asian students at U.S. colleges and universities, challenging these institutions to find adequate responses not just to an emergency, but to a long-term need.

At Indiana University, the crises remain a very real source of anxiety for the 600 or more IU students from the hardest-hit Asian countries. Kenneth A. Rogers, associate dean for International Programs and director of the Office of International Services (OIS), states that IU has been continuing efforts begun a year ago to develop new resources that address both short- and long-term financial needs of students whose funding from home has been cut off or diminished through no fault of their own.

These efforts form the core of the Interim Student Assistance Program (ISAP), IU's institutional response for dealing with such student crises. Developed in accordance to recommendations of the Bloomington Campus Task Force on Asian Student Concerns, the ISAP received prompt support from President Myles Brand and Bloomington Chancellor Kenneth R. R. Gros Louis.

When first established in early 1998, ISAP included emergency measures such as tuition deferment from the Bursar's Office, and a new emergency loan fund put together by the IU Foundation. It also included intensive canvassing of students to find those in difficulty and setting up a program of financial counseling by OIS.

While OIS has always provided financial assistance for international students in need—through one-on-one advising, short-term loans and grants from the Walter E Burnham Fund, and modest fee assistance awards—the Asian crisis underscored the need to find new sources and new strategies.

One new development is the Asian Student Aid Fund established at the IU Foundation. Begun with spontaneous donations from concerned IU alumni and IU faculty and staff, as well as vigorous fund-raising by the Asian Student Union (ASU), the Asian Student Aid Fund provides financial assistance to students who are nearing graduation, but who have exhausted all other sources of aid. OIS staff work closely with aid applicants to assess their needs and to determine an appropriate package of remedies, ranging from financial awards to low-cost housing arrangements and part-time employment on or off campus.

Last spring, ASU and OIS joined forces to sponsor the Asia Crisis Benefit Concerts, featuring performances by distinguished IU School of Music faculty who had seen the effects of the economic crises first-hand on their students. Organized by community volunteers John Black and Neil Tuttle, the concerts were the culmination of student fund-raising over a three-month period. Chancellor Gros Louis praised "the magnificent generosity of distinguished faculty and outstanding student performing artists of the School who have volunteered to be part of the Asia Crisis Benefit Concerts... The ASU initiatives which led to the creation of the Fund and to the presentation of the concerts are both exemplary and richly deserving of our appreciation," said Chancellor Gros Louis. All proceeds from the concerts went to the Asian Student Aid Fund.

The Asian crisis produced new

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Web Resources for International Student Financial Assistance

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-IUIRC
- Shawn Reynolds

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national programs, including the ASEAN Student Assistance Awards Program and the ASIA-HELP loan program. These programs, funded by multinational businesses and philanthropic organizations, reviewed applications from all over the U.S.

IUB was permitted a maximum of twelve nominations. Eleven students received loans or grants. These awards require matching funds from the institution. The IU President’s office, the Bloomington campus administration, and the new Asian Culture Center allocated special funds that were used to provide these matching funds. Through the support of IU Vice President and Chief Financial Officer Judith Palmer, the President’s office has continued its allocation so that matching funds are available for future rounds.

The economic crisis in Asia has highlighted a change in the character of the work of offices like the Office of International Services. Until recently, universities expected only a small minority of international students to have persistent financial difficulties. Now, more and more international students must package various kinds of financial assistance, in the way that U.S. students have done for years. And international students are asking OIS how to do that.

An important part of that package is the education loan, long used by domestic students to finance their education. International students—and financial institutions in their home countries—are just becoming aware of this concept. Citibank Japan, for example, now offers education loans up to ¥6,000,000 to Japanese students enrolled at U.S. universities. Banks in other countries are exploring similar programs.

Most international students can apply for U.S. loans only if they have credit-worthy cosigners who are U.S. citizens or permanent residents. Few can meet this requirement. IU has, for almost a year now, actively explored the development of loan programs which allow students to have a home-country cosigner. Such programs, now in the works at several international financial institutions, will serve not only students in an immediate crisis, but the vast number of students who still consider a U.S. university education as their primary objective in years to come.

— Lynn Schoch
Office of International Services

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every morning, taking lessons in Hindi every day, shedding her conservative Midwestern clothes for the more comfortable salwar kameez worn by Indian women all over, all the while keeping up with the written reports that were due back in Bloomington by specific deadlines.

Chad Norman, the first program participant to go to India, found the experience “truly enlightening.” He especially appreciated the mutual compassion and respect he observed in such an extremely diverse and centuries-old society. “I hope that some of this age-old wisdom will rub off on me,” he said.

Currently, student teachers Jeremy Voyles and Tara Wargel are preparing for their trip to India later this academic year. Voyles, who will leave in March 1999, chose a site in the foothills of the Himalayas because he wanted a place that “didn’t fit the mold.” Stachowski agrees, saying that “those who choose to go to India have to have inner strength and fortitude to deal with some of the things they will encounter.” Wargel, an anthropology student with an interest in teaching, will be going to Madras.

Stachowski, pleased by the evident enthusiasm of these students for the India program, says she plans to add Taiwan to the list of countries available for the overseas program. In the meantime, she is preparing to host a seminar in March 1999 that will bring to the Bloomington campus a number of teachers and administrators from around the country who are involved in running overseas practice teaching programs similar to the IU Bloomington one.

—RMN

Wendy Gray at the Golden Temple in Amritsar, the most sacred site of the Sikh religion.