

# **Asian Studies Program Annual Assessment Report September 1, 2025**

Submitted by  
Song Yang, Director

## **I. Asian Studies (AIST) Program Goals**

The Asian Studies program currently offers a major and a minor in Asian Studies. The Chinese and Japanese programs offer minors in the Chinese and Japanese language.

Currently, the program offers regular courses in Asian languages, history, politics, culture, and society. Students enrolled in the AIST major and AIST minor are required to complete intermediate II of an Asian Language (e.g., Chinese or Japanese) and 18 – 24 credit hours of approved courses, including at least three hours in the Asian Studies Colloquium (AIST 40003). In order to earn the AIST major, students must also complete at least 6 hours of history courses. Language courses other than Chinese and Japanese can also be used to fulfill the language requirements. With director's permission, students have opportunities to substitute AIST courses with other courses they have taken outside of their curriculum.

At the end of their program, students are expected to:

1. Attain a practical proficiency in an Asian language (either Chinese or Japanese currently offered by the University or another approved Asian language).
2. Demonstrate a working knowledge of Asian histories, society, and economy.
3. Apply one or more specific theoretical approaches and research methodologies to produce a written analysis of some aspect of Asian culture or society.
4. Develop the analytical, critical thinking, and research skills needed to make sense of Asia's complex social reality.

## **II. Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes**

The above student learning outcomes are evaluated by:

- Assessing students' language proficiency in the areas of reading, writing, speaking, and listening through language proficiency tests, oral presentations or performances, written assessments, or portfolios.
- Assessing students' performance on a wide variety of assignments such as presentations, exams, or research papers.
- Having students demonstrate their writing and analytical capabilities through the successful completion of a thesis or a major research or conference paper.

Below are examples of processes used to determine student competency:

Outcome 1: Besides standardized language proficiency tests, AIST faculty members have developed several methods with which to evaluate students' language competency.

Outcome 2: The program assesses students' knowledge of Asian history, politics, culture, and society primarily through class performance, including class grades and performance on presentations, group projects or research papers, supplemented by other data such as student presentation of papers at conferences or self-evaluation of the knowledge gained during the program.

Outcome 3: This goal is assessed in courses that require students to produce a piece of research on some aspect of Asia by integrating academic content with training in qualitative or quantitative data analysis. The faculty member assesses the students' ability to apply the theories and methodologies they have learned to generate relevant analysis through literature review essays, research papers, or other work that employs qualitative or quantitative data.

Outcome 4: Faculty members assess students' analytical, critical thinking, and research skills through not only written assignments, but also other assignments such as debates, simulations, group projects, or other applied projects. Opinions reflected in exit surveys provide us with yet another means through which to assess this outcome.

### **III. Results of the Assessment of Program Learning Outcomes**

Our reviews of program learning outcomes during the 2024 – 2025 academic year reveals the following areas for continuous improvement:

#### *Increasing Student Recruitment and Retention*

Our AIST program is in need of more students majors and minors. Keys in the student recruitment and retentions are A) communications: outreaching to potential recruiting grounds, such as Walton College of Business, and College of Engineering. B) curriculum buildup, such as expanding existing course offerings to afford a wide variety of courses that fit in students' degree progress and time availability. C) clarification: it seems students are facing certain level of confusions as to their degree requirements in language proficiency, required Asian Studies Colloquium, and choosing elective courses. AIST recruitment and retention can benefit from a further clarification and communication to students who are interested and are aspired to pursue AIST majors and minors.

#### *Strengthening Curriculum Development*

Our AIST program is facing several challenges in curriculum development. Faculty retirements and turnover decrease some of our elective course offerings. At least one course in the catalog has not been offered for a while. The new coding system of changing four-digit to five-digit renders a change in our required Asian Colloquium course at (40003) level. We need to offer a wide variety of Asian studies related electives, so that AIST majors and minors have plenty of courses to choose for their intellectual growth and job market needs. Moving students through the pipeline to ensure their timely progress and graduation also requires us to afford plenty of courses to fit their scheduling needs.

So far, I have been reaching out to several faculty members in the college (School of Arts, History, Anthropology, and World Languages, Literatures, and Cultures). They offer various Asian studies related courses, which can be added to the existing curriculum. Further work is needed to streamline the course

offering by having them being offered on the regular basis and spread-out into different semesters. When added, those courses significant enrich the AIST curriculum, facilitating timely progress of current students and recruitment of perspective students.

#### *Strengthening Faculty Resources*

Faculty resources are essential to continue our small AIST programs. Unfortunately, recent retirements and turnover only aggravated the already strained resources that we have been facing. A couple of years ago, I inherited a decent amount of leftover funds in budgets that allow us to shoulder some major expenses (ADHE program reviews, hourly hiring of undergraduate assistant for two years, sponsor of several events on campus, financial supports of faculty activities). As those funds are spent, we are not seeing any increases in annual budget, we are currently experiencing budget constraints.

Facing budget constraints and a task to recruit prospective affiliate faculty members who can offer AIST electives, I plan to work with the Dean's office to leverage on our own existing strengths, identifying those who teach Asian Studies related courses. I will be also using other methods (other than monetary awards) to incentivize faculty members. However, sponsorship of events and hiring undergraduate assistant requires certain level of budget. It is a balance between resource constraints and faculty/student recruitments. We must be innovative in our approaches to resolve this tension, so that it achieves positive cycle rather than downward spiral.

### **III. Changes to the AIST program made or planned**

Below are the proposed changes to the AIST program based on the assessment results reported above:

#### *Improving Student Recruitment and Retention*

Our number 1 priority is student recruitment and retention. To increase our student majors and minors, I plan to visit Dean's offices at Walton Business and College of Engineering. From there, I intend to reach out to their student body and organizations to broadcast the AIST program. I plan to engage in promotional activities of AIST for freshmen and sophomore in Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences. Working with the Advising Center at Fulbright, we will also identify issues that prevent timely progress of AIST students, reaching high level of student's retentions.

#### *Improving our Curriculum*

As stated above, we plan to add several new electives to AIST students, reforming the required course of AIST 40003 Asian Studies Colloquium, and streamlining all the courses to ensure timely progress. We also aim to strengthen our faculty offering in the areas of other Asian cultures and societies, such as Korea and India, in addition to our traditional strength in Chinese and Japanese. Recent years have witnessed significant growth of Korean K-pop cultures and Indian traditional customs. We anticipate increasing interests in those areas, hence the future needs of instructions on those subjects.

#### *Strengthening Faculty Resources*

In the short term, we need to leverage existing strengths across our college to identify faculty resources, such as faculty members in the School of Arts, WLLC, History, Anthropology, and other Departments, who teach Asian studies related courses. I plan to reach out to work with our college to identify those faculty members and make contacts with them for course offerings. In the long run, we aim to create a part-time line, or even a jointly appointed tenure track position (perhaps with the School of Arts). We

understand this goal will not be reached until we achieve sufficient and sustained number of AIST majors and minors.