

University of Colorado
Center for Asian Studies
Strategic Plan

Mission and Values

The Mission for the Center for Asian Studies is to provide a physical place where Asia-related interests intersect and find a whole greater than the sum of their parts, and where student and community-driven initiatives to embrace different world views have a home. The Center seeks to build a space where projects of Asia-related student-centered learning, interdisciplinary teaching and research, community engagement, and campus internationalization can be explored, experimented, and realized. Recognizing that there has never been a more pressing time to understand this complex and diverse continent, whether one lives within or far beyond its borders, CAS strives to facilitate active engagements with and within Asia, while making Asia as accessible as possible to the whole of the CU Boulder community.

The Center for Asian Studies strives to be a space of community, curiosity and respectful engagement with Asia. We view the area studies endeavor as a necessary yet distinct complement to disciplinary knowledge, and recognize the historic and geographic centrality that Asia has and continues to play in the human venture. Rather than treating Asia as an object of knowledge, however, we aspire to learn from Asia through self-critical intellectual inquiry, realizing a broader, more grounded, and more nuanced understanding of the human experience.

Context: global Asia

As the largest of the world's continents, comprising a third of the earth's land area and some two thirds of the earth's population, Asia's size and diversity has always represented a challenge to the categories and conventions of area studies scholarship. It has thus become standard practice to carve Asia into more manageable subunits such as East Asia, Southeast Asia, and South Asia, in order to convey some sense, however awkward, of the geographical commonality that typically lies at the heart of the area studies project. Yet 'Asia' remains troubled by the imprecision of its boundaries and the fact that in some cases, these boundaries were created by colonialism.

While most area studies centers have tackled this problem by developing sub-regional specializations, CAS – as a pan-Asia center – views the fluidity and undefinition of 'Asia' as a point of departure. By this, we mean to emphasize Asia as a region of cross-boundary connection rather than bounded coherence. Indeed, cross-boundary connection has always been at the heart of the area studies concept. The study of Asia in the US, for instance, has been closely linked to its geopolitical significance, particularly during the Cold War years separating World War II and the Vietnam War. But US defeat in Vietnam and the normalization of diplomatic relations with China meant the relative eclipse of the Asia-Pacific as a geopolitical priority by concerns over its integration into the global economy. As a result, the study of Asia has experienced some significant readjustment to account for the transnational border-crossing

impulse of a new so-called 'Pacific Century.' Once a key battleground for Cold War geopolitics, Asia was reconfigured as an emerging market and key hub of globalization. As UC Berkeley Chancellor Nicholas Dirks wrote, "the idea of the 'global' – stemming from the identification of the importance of a new world economic system and marketplace – replaced the notion of a world made up of discrete areas." [1] In response, scholars have called for greater focus on not only the regional connections within Asia but the transnational linkages that connect Asia to other parts of the world.

With an increasingly global Asia as our context, then, CAS views the area studies project as one which recognizes the broad need, both within and beyond the academy, for a 'knowledge of the present' that focuses on our links to Asia as a partner in intellectual collaboration, political negotiation, cultural exchange, economic integration, environmental cooperation, and community engagement. [2] While the University of Colorado maintains excellent programs in Asian languages, arts, cultures, geographies and histories – programs which serve as the necessary foundation of any strong area studies program – the University also boasts internationally recognized strengths beyond the arts and humanities. These include, among others, programs in environmental sciences, sustainable development, civil engineering, and international business. These programs should also be included as a fundamental part of the intellectual context for CAS.

Beyond this, CAS serves a broader State of Colorado community that has significant and increasing interests in Asia. Five of Colorado's top ten trading partners are Asian, accounting for nearly one third of Colorado's entire export trade value in 2021. Colorado's communities of Asian origin continue to grow, with AAPI voters now making up 3.5% of the state electorate, and Asia is *the* driver of international student enrollment on the CU Boulder campus, as it is nationwide. In 2022, roughly three fourths of CU Boulder's international students were from Asia. As the University of Colorado seeks to deepen its ties to Asia, CAS expects to serve the university as a central actor in facilitating and strengthening those ties.

Finances and Infrastructure

As an academic unit in the College of Arts & Sciences, CAS is best described as a hybrid center, or a quasi-department. Like departments, CAS supports major and minor degree programs, as well as undergraduate and graduate certificate programs. Yet CAS is also an interdisciplinary research center dedicated to building capacity in Asian area studies across the entire campus. It is also a center for community engagement and professional development in K-16 education. Unlike departments, the majority of CAS funding comes from external grants, most of which are leveraged to secure matching funds from the university. Despite managing the Asian Studies curriculum and degree programs and supporting several faculty positions, CAS staff resources remain minimal and largely grant funded. This also distinguishes CAS from other degree-granting programs. While CAS has been remarkably successful at obtaining external grant funding over the years (winning nearly \$30 million in funding since its inception in 1999), the Center remains challenged by insufficient staff resources – the basic human infrastructure needed to maintain its functionality as an academic unit. There remains a consistent and pressing need for more stable university funding for this infrastructure at CAS, and many of the goals and objectives identified in this strategic plan depend on this need being met by the university.

Space

In 2011, CAS moved its offices from Norlin Library to the former IBS3 building at 1424 Broadway. These offices were in turn vacated in 2019 due to the demolition of 1424 Broadway to make way for a new hotel and conference center. From 2019 to 2023, CAS occupied temporary office space in the Center for Academic Success and Engagement (CASE) at 1725 Euclid. In 2024, CAS will occupy permanent office space in Denison Arts & Sciences (1080 Broadway).

CAS Administrative Structure

The Center's current bylaws (2023) specify the CAS administrative structure consisting of Faculty Director, Executive Director, Asian Studies Program Director, and Executive Committee (consisting of affiliated faculty and staff). In addition, CAS includes two autonomous entities, the American Association of Teachers of Japanese (AATJ), and the Program for Teaching East Asia (TEA), with the AATJ Executive Director and the TEA Director both reporting to the CAS Faculty Director. More detail on the Center's administrative structure can be found here: https://www.colorado.edu/cas/sites/default/files/attached-files/cas_bylaws_1-23.pdf

It should be noted that the Executive Committee is tasked with playing a significant role in contributing to the broad vision of CAS, and that this entails proposing new initiatives, identifying the Center's annual theme and related programming, identifying and pursuing possible academic exchange relations with Asian institutions, and reaching across disciplines and across campus to develop collaborative relationships between CAS and other schools and programs.

As part of its community engagement efforts, the Center maintains a council of community leaders – the Asian Studies Council – who share the CAS mission of advancing knowledge about and access to Asia. Members of this group contribute to this mission in various ways, including identifying and securing private funding streams from local and national foundations, corporations and individuals interested in the promotion of Asian Studies; strengthening the Center's ties with the local community beyond the CU Boulder campus; and identifying potential speakers and other contributors to the Center's programming on an ongoing basis.

The Asian Studies Major

CAS has managed the interdisciplinary major in Asian Studies since 2010. In 2014, a minor in Asian Studies was added. Regional tracks in Korea, South Asia, West Asia, and Southeast Asia have been added to the major, and in 2023, a certificate in Tibetan and Himalayan Studies was added. The Asian Studies curriculum is a core component of the Center's mission of making Asia as accessible as possible to the whole of the CU Boulder campus. Over the past decade, CAS has been successful at building a suite of gateway and capstone courses for the Asian Studies major and minor degrees, as well as maintaining a number of specialty courses in focus topics in Asian Studies. The Asian Studies curriculum is an important platform upon which to develop innovative multi-disciplinary initiatives dedicated to advancing understanding about and incorporating knowledge from Asia.

Strategic Plan

Comprehensive goals and objectives

Building Capacity in Asian Studies

While the broad mission of the Center is to make Asia as accessible to as much of the CU Boulder community as possible, CAS seeks to become a center in which the campus Asian Studies community is invested and towards which that community develops a sense of ownership. Thus, the Center seeks to provide the space and other resources through which to build a vibrant Asian Studies community on the CU Boulder campus. As a service center for that community, the future development of CAS is driven primarily by the needs and goals of the Asian Studies faculty itself. The Center's primary strategic planning goal is to build that sense of ownership among an increasingly broad and diverse community of scholars whose work intersects with Asia in multiple ways.

Infrastructure

As noted in the Finance and Infrastructure section above, an overarching goal for the long-term fiscal health and sustainability of CAS is to stabilize the Center's infrastructural funding. Including CAS staff salaries in the College's continuing budget is thus a strategic priority. With our move into Denison Arts & Sciences in 2024, CAS looks forward to occupying permanent space in the heart of campus. A long term goal for the Center is to provide a physical space for CU Boulder's Asian Studies community, where Asian Studies students and faculty can gather outside of their disciplinary homes. We remain committed to raising additional funding toward transforming our new home into just such a space.

Community Engagement

CAS strives to be a resource and conduit for community engagement in Asian Studies. This "community" encompasses local, regional, national, and even global scales, and includes K-16 educators, private sector and business community members, non-profit organizations, diplomatic personnel, policymakers and elected officials, as well as refugees and other members of the Asian diaspora living in or near Boulder. "Engagement" entails a diversity of forms, including providing expertise and programming for K-16 professional development; K-12 curriculum development and dissemination, promoting community engaged scholarship; serving the public good through service-learning and event programming; partnerships with local, national and/or Asia-based organizations; and a commitment to learning from the many communities with which we engage, both on and off-campus. An important component of this engagement involves a proactive effort to respond to and address the needs of Asia-based scholars and students displaced or otherwise at-risk from authoritarian regimes. Rather than viewing community engagement as an 'add-on' component to the CAS mission, we view it as integral to all facets of that mission.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Internationalization

CAS is committed to contributing to ongoing campus initiatives and conversations regarding diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). In particular, the Center will continue to identify opportunities to broaden the conversation around issues related to the internationalization of the CU Boulder campus, as well as

contributing an Asian area studies perspective to these issues. We find that international members of the CU community are frequently overlooked when DEI issues are raised, despite the fact that xenophobia and racism affect them as well; relatedly, DEI discussions can benefit from being considered through cross-cultural, comparative, and international lenses. While CAS is not an ‘identity center’ per se, it has an obligation to interrogate and make visible issues of justice and experiences of oppression and racism throughout Asia, and to relate these – as much as possible – to ongoing campus conversations concerning these issues in Boulder, the US, and the rest of the world.

Toward this end, CAS will strive to work towards greater diversity, equity and inclusion in our own administrative processes, research support, and educational mission. As noted below, these efforts are demonstrated in specific goals for hiring, merit reviews, research initiatives, and pedagogy.

Organizational Structure of CAS

As a hybrid-center / quasi-department, CAS strives to build an organizational structure that provides space for each of its distinct parts to thrive autonomously, while enabling the integration of these parts to strengthen the Center as a whole. Such a structure is already suggested by the two community engagement units within CAS: AATJ and TEA. While these serve off-campus community constituencies, they also contribute to and draw resources from campus scholarship, research, and teaching in Asian Studies. CAS also houses the autonomous Tibet Himalaya Initiative (THI), which is also integrated into the Asian Studies curriculum and scholarly activities. As CAS continues to grow, we envision the Asian Studies degree programs and curriculum functioning as an increasingly autonomous unit within CAS, one which is nevertheless fully integrated with all aspects of the CAS mission.

The specific aims and objectives articulated below are premised upon this broader goal of a CAS comprised of relatively autonomous units organized around community engagement activities, curricular activities, and research activities.

Undergraduate and Graduate Education

5 Year Goals

- Increase enrollments in and visibility of the Certificate in Tibet Himalayan Studies
- Continue efforts to increase Asian Studies majors and minors
- Continue building existing tracks in Asian Studies major, particularly Southeast and South Asia
- Develop an interdisciplinary undergraduate “Climate and Society curriculum” leading to the development of a new Certificate
- Expand community engagement and service-learning opportunities in the Asian Studies curriculum
- Continue to develop and build a strong collaborative relationship with Asian Languages and Civilizations
- Maintain a working relationship with ALTEC to offer Directed Independent Language Study (DILS) in less commonly taught Asian languages
- Hire a permanent instructor in Indonesian DILS

- Expand the Tang Global Studies program by adding an additional Tang Global Seminar to run concurrently with the existing Seminar
- Strive to maintain our status as an undergraduate Title VI National Resource Center in Asian area studies, including summer Foreign Language and Area Studies fellowships for undergraduate students
- Continue to offer Foreign Language and Area Studies fellowships for graduate students for both summer and academic year awards

10 Year Goals

- Develop a scholarship program for international students at CU
- Establish undergraduate scholarship and graduate fellowship programs in Asian Studies
- Work with organizations in China to enhance the Tang Global Seminar with a strong community engagement and/or service-learning component
- Cultivate and work with donors to build an innovative Tang China Program for undergraduate China Studies

Vision goals

- Create an innovative Asian Studies undergraduate curriculum that provides practical literacy in contemporary and historical Asia with cross-campus partnerships reflecting a broad diversity of undergraduate student interests and career paths, including traditional area studies disciplines, music and creative arts, environmental sciences, development studies, engineering, and international business.

Research and Scholarship

5 Year Goals

- Develop a pattern of affiliated faculty running research and program grants through CAS, with one new grant administered by CAS each year
- Continue to develop an annual theme for the Center and fund an annual Asia Symposium based on that theme with a specific outcome (book, journal article, or related product) as the goal of this event
- Maintain a speaker series, funding roughly 10 events per year
- Be a resource for supporting greater knowledge about Asia among CU Boulder faculty
- Build a strong partnership with the CU Libraries that supports the CAS mission through resource acquisition, exhibition and other space resources, and digital platforms
- Advocate for a South or West Asia library position with expertise in Arabic or Indic languages
- Develop a funded program to host Asian scholars in exile from authoritarian regimes
- Develop staff capacity to manage faculty research grants in Asian studies and work with Asian Studies faculty to run their grants through CAS by offering a robust grants management service
- Pursue funding opportunities, in partnership with Asian Languages and Civilizations, to maintain and expand Asian language instruction
- Pursue funding opportunities, and cultivate Asian Studies faculty support, to develop a 'research cluster' basis to the CAS research mission, including postdoc and visiting scholar funding

10 Year Goals

- Establish scholarly exchange programs with Asian academic institutions in Indonesia, South Korea, India, and Vietnam
- Build a funded 'research cluster' organizational structure as the basis of the CAS research mission, including postdoc positions, visiting scholar funding, and a faculty research fellowship program, aimed at producing workshops and published scholarship as well as building strong institutional relationships between CAS and diverse campus schools, departments and programs

Vision goals

- Become the major Asian Studies research hub for the greater Rocky Mountain region

Community Engagement

5 Year Goals

- Expand community engagement and service learning opportunities in the Asian Studies curriculum
- Continue our existing partnership with CU Denver's Center for International Business Education Research (CIBER) at the Institute for International Business
- Expand CAS partnership with regional community colleges and Metropolitan State University
- Develop new partnerships with Asia-based and Asia-oriented organizations, including Colorado-based Asian honorary consuls and nonprofit organizations serving Asian heritage communities
- Work with language and cultural communities beyond the university, including language clubs and heritage speakers to cultivate enrollment in Asian language courses
- Expand the number of CU faculty and graduate students who regularly participate in Asia-related community engagement activities, including K-16 professional development workshops
- Maintain long-running professional development programs specific to K-12 Asian studies education and add new programs targeted to currently under-addressed regions of Asia and K-12 disciplines.
- Advocate for informed teaching about Asia within the Colorado K-12 curriculum.
- Expand K-12 programming to engage more members of the CU Asian studies community, including faculty, graduate students, and others working in K-12 "outreach" on campus.

10 Year Goals

- Work with organizations in China to enhance the Tang Global Seminar with a strong community engagement and/or service learning component.
- Expand the funding base for programs designed to strengthen K-16 Asian studies education.

Vision Goals

- Build better knowledge of Asia in K-12 education; cultivate tomorrow's Asian Studies majors and Asian language learners in today's K-12 education pipeline

- Raise awareness within the CU Asian studies community and beyond of the role of K-12 education in contributing to and expanding undergraduate enrollment in Asian studies on campus.

[1] Nicholas Dirks, "Scholars, spies, and global studies," *Chronicle of Higher Education* (13 August, 2012).

[2] John Lie, "Asian studies / global studies: transcending area studies and social sciences," *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review* 2 (March, 2012).