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Sigur Center for Asian Studies

PRESS RELEASE

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**Sigur Center for Asian Studies Awards More than \$84,000 to 15 Students
in Summer Language, Field Research, and Internship Grants**

WASHINGTON, March 30 – Today the Sigur Center for Asian Studies at The George Washington University’s Elliott School of International Affairs awarded \$84,324 in student fellowship support to 15 undergraduate, masters, and PhD students to conduct field research, intensive language study, and internships in eight countries in East, Southeast, and South Asia as well as Africa. The Sigur Center has awarded more than \$1,000,000 to 105 undergraduate and graduate students in fellowship support over the last five years.

“We are very proud of our extensive support to students over the years,” said Dr. Shawn McHale, Sigur Center Director and Associate Professor of History and International Affairs. “We want our students to deepen their engagement with Asia, and our funding – whether for language study or research -- helps make that mission come true.”

Among the 15 fellows, five have been awarded field research grants totaling \$29,123 to conduct research on a wide range of Asian issues. MA Asian Studies candidate Matt Grieger’s project is entitled "From Selling Flowers to Selling Sex: Sex Trafficking of Akha Boys in Northern Thailand." MA International Development Studies candidate Karen Mo will explore "Laos's Commercial Forestry Development and its Implications for Local Communities: An Impact Assessment of Plantation Projects Funded by Foreign Capitals and International Donors." PhD Political Science candidate Dawn Murphy will travel to South Africa where she will examine "China's Relations with the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa in the post-Cold War Era." PhD Political Science candidates Varun Piplani and Ajay Verghese will both carry out fieldwork in India where they will look at "Rethinking Economic Reforms: Power and Development in the Indian Countryside" and "The Historical Roots of Caste and Tribal Conflict in Contemporary India," respectively.

"This grant will allow me to gain much-needed field research skills, as well as an insight into the economic and environmental challenges facing Laos's rural communities," Mo said. The experience will be invaluable for the advancement of my career in international development."

Four students have been awarded a total \$24,000 for the Chinese Language Grant for Language Study in Taiwan. The four fellows include: Kazunori Koyama, sophomore, International Affairs; Shawn Lynott and Christopher Wong, MA candidates, International Affairs; and Seung Joon Paik, PhD candidate, Political Science.

Three students have been awarded a total \$17,201 for the Korean Language Grant. The three fellows include: Caleb Dependahl, junior, Asian Studies and Chinese Language and Literature; Susanne Greenbaum, MA candidate, Speech and Language Pathology; and Julianna Thai-Ngo, sophomore, Asian Studies and International Affairs.

"This grant will enable me to improve my Korean language skills to a more professional level matching my Mandarin, which is something I have desired for a long time and would be unable to do otherwise," said Dependahl. "It will not only increase my cross-cultural understanding and professional marketability, but will also open up a whole new range of research possibilities and give me an added dimension of perspective that few students of China and East Asia attain. 'Thankful' does not begin to describe my gratitude in being selected as a recipient for this grant," Dependahl said.

Two students have been awarded a total \$12,000 for the Asian Language Grant. The two fellows include: Connor Cislo, MA candidate, International Affairs and Kalisha Holmes, junior, International Affairs. Cislo will study Japanese in Japan while Holmes will study Chinese in the People's Republic of China.

Lastly, one student received the Sigur Center's inaugural Asian Internship Grant. Ivan Lidarev, International Affairs MA candidate, will spend this summer interning at a defense and strategic analysis think tank in New Delhi, India.

The four Taiwan grants were made possible by the generous support of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the United States. The Sigur Center is grateful to its [India Initiative](#) and [Friends of Korea](#) donors, for funding the three grants for travel to India and three grants for Korean language study. Further support was made possible through the GWU Office of the Provost through its designation of the Sigur Center as a Signature Program.

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