

# University of Massachusetts Boston Asian American Studies Program



Graduation Celebration

2024-2025

27 May 2025

## Asian American Studies Program Core and Affiliated Faculty & Staff – May 2025

Ping-Ann Addo, Associate Professor and Chair, Anthropology  
Pratyush Bharati, Professor, Management Science and Information Systems, College of Management  
Elora Chowdhury, Professor and Chair, Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies  
Patrick Clarkin, Associate Professor, Anthropology  
Nia Duong, Co-Production and Student/Community Engagement Program Coordinator, Asian American Studies  
Christopher S. Fung, Senior Lecturer, Anthropology  
Richard Hung, Associate Professor, School for the Environment  
Peter Kiang, Professor and Director, Asian American Studies, School for Global Inclusion and Social Development, CEHD  
Pratna Kem, Lecturer, Asian American Studies  
Marlene Kim, Professor, Economics  
Son Ca Lâm, Assistant Professor, Asian American Studies, School for Global Inclusion and Social Development, CEHD  
Andrew Leong, Associate Professor, Philosophy and Law  
Raymond Liu, Professor and Chair, Marketing, College of Management  
Lusa Lo, Professor, Special Education Program, Curriculum & Instruction, CEHD  
Rajini Srikanth, Professor, English; Dean of the Faculty  
Lakshmi Srinivas, Associate Professor, Asian American Studies, School for Global Inclusion and Social Development, CEHD  
Karen Suyemoto, Professor, Psychology & Asian American Studies  
Shirley Tang, Endowed Distinguished Professor for Asian American Studies  
Ammany Ty, Co-Production and Archive Program Coordinator, Asian American Studies  
Kim Soun Ty, Lecturer, Asian American Studies  
Linh-Phuong Vũ, Lecturer, Asian American Studies  
Paul Watanabe, Professor, Political Science and Director, Institute for Asian American Studies  
Zong-Guo Xia, Professor, School for the Environment

### The Program

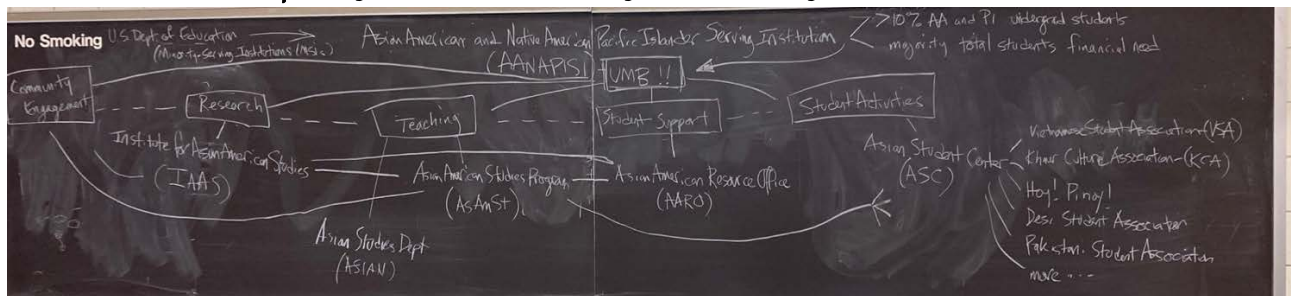
For over thirty-five years, UMass Boston's Asian American Studies Program has offered intellectually-challenging, emotionally-engaging, culturally-responsive, culturally-sustaining instruction in the classroom with holistic, high-impact practices of mentoring, community-building, service-learning, and advocacy to address the social and academic needs of students as well as the critical capacity-building needs of local Asian American communities. The Program offers the most Asian American Studies courses, faculty, and community linkages of any university in New England. The Program's alumni include teachers, social workers, health care providers, business entrepreneurs, and leaders of local Asian American community organizations. By grounding our curriculum, teaching, and applied research in the realities of local Asian American communities and by respecting the knowledge and bilingual/bicultural skills that many UMass Boston students bring to the classroom, the AsAmSt Program creates powerful learning environments for all students to gain critical understandings about the historical experiences, voices, contemporary issues, and contributions of diverse Asian populations in the U.S. Graduate students from any area who have Asian American Studies interests can serve as teaching/research assistants, mentors to undergraduates, and special project developers for the Program. AANAPISI students from Bunker Hill Community College and those from partnering pre-collegiate and community youth programs are encouraged to access AsAmSt's learning opportunities. Community members and organizations as well as alumni participate in our activities in many short- and long-term ways. Since 2010, UMass Boston has been the only AANAPISI research university in New England designated and funded each year by the U.S. Dept. of Education.

## Celebrating our 2024-2025 Graduates in Asian American Studies

Hearty congratulations to eight students from 2024-2025 who have completed at least six courses that satisfy our AsAmSt program-of-study requirements: Benjamin Chen (陈乃铭), Raymond Hang, Naomi Katrina Martinez Layon, Lily Tran, Thomas Duong Quan Tran, MyLin Tran Le, Allyson Tse, and Maylee You. They are the newest of 170 students who have graduated with AsAmSt concentrations since 2000.

Dozens of other UMB students are also graduating with at least one AsAmSt course on their transcripts. Our offering of 10-12 courses each semester for all students, regardless of background profile or major, is a genuine contribution to the public good which most students lack at other schools in New England. Support from our dedicated students, faculty, staff, alumni, community partners, donors, and AANAPISI allies including IAAS, AARO, and SGISD/CEHD, has been vital, once again, this year.

## Asserting Core Capacity as the Community's University



As chaos has cascaded nationally in 2025, our mapping of core AsAmSt assets reveals domains of modest but meaningful control amidst relational conditions of real uncertainty. We have ferociously championed UMB's AANAPISI status and directly co-generated \$10M in US DoE grant funds since 2010 while adding substantively to research in education and Asian American Studies from our grounding as an urban public RI AANAPISI. But 15 years before Congress had even created the AANAPISI designation, we had already clearly asserted our institutional identity as "the community's university". Thus, when the Association for Asian American Studies conference came to Boston in April, we gathered ourselves together across generations to remind the national field of our powerful people and purposeful praxis at UMB.



[Above and cover photos by Oscar Chen from the [AsAmSt-hosted reception at the AAAS Conference in Boston](#), April 2025]

# Program-of-Study in Asian American Studies

## Benjamin Chen (陈乃铭)

I am a second-generation Chinese American graduating with a program-of-study in Asian American Studies, a major in Philosophy and a minor in Psychology. Coming from a culturally traditional and humble background of refugees and immigrants, restaurant or hospitality workers and business owners, I am



grateful to have been brought up in an environment of support and humility. Being one of the few Asian families in my Quincy neighborhood, we were surrounded by neighbors who were friendly and caring, who respectfully kept to themselves but were prepared to lend a helping hand in times of need. Due to a mentality of self-sufficiency as well as language barriers, my parents never sought help from others. Believing in honestly-earned money saved up over time, my family had a restaurant where we were able to make meaningful connections with our local regulars. My parents were not strict when it came to grades, but their philosophy assumed that with better education comes better opportunities. Growing up, my interests focused more on history than STEM fields, but my parents still tried hard to support and understand me. They shielded my sisters and me from certain issues and provided for us to the best of their abilities. Having to work long, tiring hours, their goals were to ensure that we are able to focus on our studies to someday have better career opportunities in hopes that we will not just live comfortably, but also take care of them in return.

My first course in Asian American Studies was Dr. Peter Kiang's AsAmSt 223L Asians in the U.S. in Fall 2022. I had stumbled upon it by chance to fulfill my gen ed humanities requirement. Peter's "*meaning of names*" assignment is the first prompt to ever really challenge me to think about not just why I was named Benjamin or 陈乃铭, but what identity means to me and how my sense of identity is developing. I found myself spending time with peers from the Program and within the welcoming environments of the AsAmSt office, eager to learn more. I knew early on that I would pursue more AsAmSt courses. Through Tuesday Story Salons and the final exhibition by Professor Shirley Tang's AsAmSt 398 Applied Research course of Fall 2022, I learned about many efforts to raise awareness regarding the escalations of anti-Asian hate and local instances of violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. These lessons also included the broader history of anti-Asian discrimination dating back to the late 1800s. I felt the ironies of Asian/Asian American diasporic experiences resulting from U.S. imperialism which displaced many as refugees and migrants who came to the States, only to be discriminated against by the people who supported conflicts that displaced them their homes. As Dr. Ian Sanjay Patel similarly states about the British Empire, "*we are*

*here because you were there.*" Many eye-opening lessons in Asian American Studies solidified my dedication to further expand my understanding.

My time at UMass Boston and especially within the Asian American Studies Program has significantly shifted my perspectives on life and my sense of purpose. Through the AsAmSt 294- Resources for Vietnamese American Studies course, I connected with the local Vietnamese community and have since dedicated a lot of effort to volunteer at events like the annual Boston Little Saigon Night Markets and the Tết in Boston Lunar New Year Festivals. These memorable experiences of working alongside others planning and hosting events where communities can come together culturally really opened my eyes to the power of collective engagement. These experiences opened me up to a sense of community. Learning about the diasporic experiences of many of our local communities and recognizing how we as minorities are marginalized by systems of oppression, I aim to continue my efforts in fostering cultural awareness, uplifting and empowering the diverse aspects of arts and heritage, and contributing to the creation of meaningful initiatives and platforms where voices can be heard and valued. Throughout this work, I will remain mindful of the historical contexts of our communities, ensuring that appropriate boundaries are respected. As I wind down my undergraduate studies, I now work as the Tour Manager Intern for the Asian Community Development Corporation (ACDC)'s Chinatown Tours Program. In this role, I raise awareness for ACDC's Placekeeping efforts in Chinatown, covering aspects of development from early Chinese settlement to present-day challenges of displacement in Boston.

## Raymond Hang

Hey! I'm a first-gen college student, majoring in Psychology and minoring in Asian American Studies. My parents immigrated here from China and Hong Kong, and I grew up in Boston speaking English, Cantonese, and a little Mandarin. Even though I'm still in school, I'm obsessed with traveling and trying all kinds of Asian foods (seriously, hit me up for recommendations). Personally, I like to go out and travel around Boston looking for new restaurants that I, my friends, or my family might like, so if you want a few recommendations from a foodie, let me know!

Honestly, I first signed up for Asian American Studies just to take classes with my friends, but it ended up being way more meaningful than I expected. There was this one assignment in Professor Peter Kiang's Asians in the US class where we had to interview our parents about the story behind our names and about cultural traditions like the Harvest Moon Festival. I ended up asking my parents stuff I'd never thought to ask before, like what their lives were like growing up in China and Hong Kong, or why they chose my name. It hit me then that I'd never really talked to them about their own stories or the crazy sacrifices they made to give me a better life here. Asian American Studies kind of flipped a switch in how I see my family and their journey. Additionally, it helped me establish a connection between my cultural identity and the concepts I'm studying in psychology, which is quite nice.



Moving forward, I want to blend my Psychology background with the insights I've gained from Asian American Studies. As a possible future mental health professional, I want to address the stigma surrounding therapy in many Asian communities and advocate for culturally responsive care. My minor



taught me to listen deeply to stories, whether in family interviews or community histories, and this skill will be vital in building trust with clients whose experiences mirror my parents'. Beyond my career, I plan to stay engaged with Asian American advocacy by volunteering or supporting local community groups in Boston or mentoring first-gen students. Wherever I go, I'll carry forward the lessons of AsAmSt: that understanding our roots isn't just about the past but also very much about shaping more bright upcoming futures.

## Naomí Katrína Martínez Layon

I am a second-generation Filipino American student born and raised within Middlesex County, MA. I have always moved around this predominantly white region, and I have never really had a solid footing whether at home, within my education, or within myself. I am the youngest of two and I'll be the second in my immediate family to earn a bachelor's degree, but I'm the first who is able to complete their college education within four years without any disruptions.

I transferred to UMass Boston as a third year during Fall 2023. With the help of the Asian American Resource Office (AARO), I was first introduced to the Asian American Studies Program and took my first ASAMST class, Asian American Psychology with Dr. Andrew Choi. In Spring 2024, I took Southeast Asians in the US from Dr. Shirley Tang with Nia Duong and Ammany Ty, and truly found my spark within the Program. I learned how I could support my community, how to rediscover and reclaim my Filipino American identity, and grow as a future leader.

In Fall 2024, I took ASAMST 397, Applied Research in Asian American Studies and joined the ASAMST Digital Story Telling (DST) team. Here, I was able to lead and support a group of students to identify Filipino student needs and present their experiences and perspectives through a Story Salon and original AANAPISI Theater performance with assistance from the DST Team. In Spring 2025 through Dr. Tang's ASAMST 370, Asian American Media Literacy course, I created a short film-like video of finding what home means to me despite... In addition to my DST contributions, I had a research opportunity under Dr. Son Ca Lam to create a Filipino Community Resource Guide for Massachusetts by conducting interviews with folks who are interconnected with many Filipino organizations in the Northeast.

During April 2025, I had the privilege to attend national conferences of Asian Pacific Americans in Higher Education (APAHE) in Oakland and the Association for Asian American Studies (AAAS) in Boston. These opportunities opened my eyes even more to see what it truly means to be part of an AANAPISI institution and to see how more efforts will continue to be made over the decades, thanks in part to AANAPISI program grants, AARO, and the ASAMST Program. My involvement was also enabled through continued support from Hoy!Pinoy! A club that is more than just a club, to me it is a second family. Without this community that made me feel supported within my own identity, I would not be able to find where I am now today as a student leader.

Overall, I now recognize that leadership and activism have many different forms. Whether that be in the front lines picketing, organizing a general board meeting, finding space to celebrate the joys out of struggle, educating and taking pride in oneself/community, or even just existing as an act of resistance. Through these spaces and programs, I was able to discover and practice my own way of showcasing and supporting what I value, how I lead, and who I can represent.

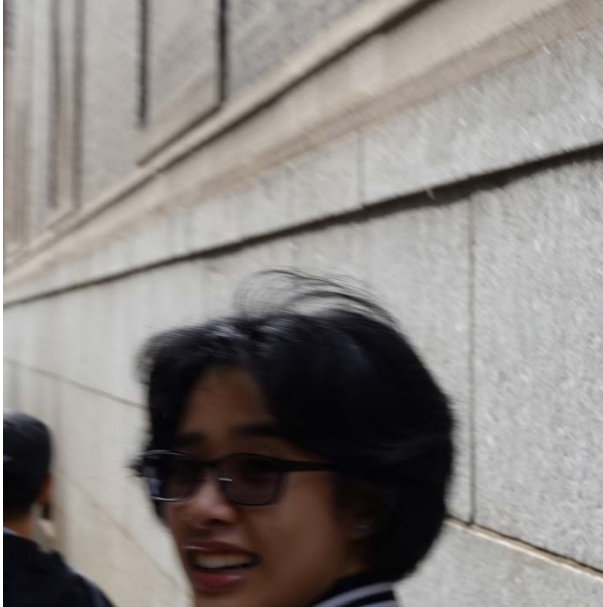
In the future, I hope to translate the AANAPISI opportunities and experiences that I received from UMass Boston into the way I give back to my community even outside of Massachusetts; continuing to document and archive “kwentuhan” through my photography and potentially videography; creating a nonprofit to support Southeast Asians Americans in the technology space; achieving a Masters in Asian American Studies. Despite challenges during my transfer process to UMass Boston, I am honored to say that I’m graduating with my Bachelor’s degree in Information Technology and Program-of-Study in Asian American Studies. To AARO, ASAMST, and Hoy!Pinoy!, I cannot thank you enough for helping me find this open door to home and for helping me grow this branch of my life.

## Lily Tran

I am a second-generation Vietnamese American, graduating with a major in Biology and a program-of-study in Asian American Studies. I was born in Boston, and grew up in Randolph during my childhood, then eventually moved to Braintree to finish my education. I don’t have anything noteworthy or much to remember growing up; I trudged through life and flowed with the current like the ocean waves. Originally, I



was going to pursue art and graphic design as a degree; however, I ended up burning out during the pandemic and quit art for a few years. I felt I had no identity: not Asian enough, not Vietnamese enough, not American enough. I was but to be a projection of the perfect daughter of a Vietnamese household. As the “face” of my family, I was told to choose a career that would be financially stable in the long term, and in some ways during the process, I buried what I truly wanted to do. Eventually, I was introduced to the Asian American Studies Program and their courses during my third year at UMass Boston. It has been a long journey since then, rebuilding the fragmented parts of my identity and reviving forgotten dreams.



I first took AsAmSt223L (Asians in the U.S.) during Fall 2023 to fulfill general education requirements. Dr. Peter Kiang’s quiet and introspective teachings of the history of Asian Americans in the U.S. and learning about the cycle of exclusion, left me to reflect what I did not see during the pandemic, including how it ties to more relevant political issues to this day. This cycle still exists and is profound in physical spaces as well as sometimes in online spaces. For the final assignment, I produced a project on displacement, a constant theme that I see now, and everywhere in the stories that we share and the histories, resurfaced. It was the first creative project I’ve done after two years at UMB. It was a historical project for me because it was the beginning of restoring my lost, creative spark. My art work soon moved in a direction that dives more deeply, with focus, and with purpose in Asian American Studies.

After AsAmSt223L, I took AsAmSt294 (Resources for Vietnamese American Studies) to break the negative image I have of the Vietnamese Diaspora in Fields Corner and providing closure for my family’s history. Being a part of Linh’s class also exposed me to community development and mobilization for the first time. I realized that this is something I want to do, even though I may fumble over my words and make mistakes. All the history, the stories of resistance, the voices lost to time, the struggle for rights...it still persists today, and I want to contribute and strengthen these voices. The spaces that I did not know exist, are spaces I do not want to take for granted. One day, it may be gone tomorrow.

These two courses were steppingstones in unraveling a canvas of stories, of intergenerational voices, spaces, rights, connecting back to my roots. I desired to learn more, taking as many courses as I can, but also understanding my capacity. Throughout these courses, I also conducted an independent study to capture and internalize the themes and concepts. I did not think I would be able to do the things that I am able to do now. In a way, I’ve unraveled fragments of myself and am slowly putting them together. AsAmSt allowed me to reclaim myself as an artist. I want to support and spread that kind of creativity to others.



As I continue my journey beyond UMass Boston, I feel a sense of satisfaction that I accomplished something myself for the first time. I felt my work was meaningful and, in some ways, could inspire others. I do not know where I'll be after graduation, but what I know is that I have real interests that I want to pursue now. I want those interests to be an integral part of Asian American Studies and more broadly, be a part of the Asian American diaspora in the Boston area. The story of how the Program came to be at UMass Boston taught me that it is not only just activism and voices, but also how to heal from trauma, reviving buried pasts within our own families, and carrying their stories and legacy while (re)-building our lives. In what spaces can we advocate and build for, but also how do we continue to advocate for our rights? I want to integrate this wherever I will be. Perhaps I might be an artist, showing people how I view my world and what my message is. Maybe it is fighting for stronger security in the healthcare space; there are many vulnerable populations who are always at risk of being at the mercy of identity theft and fraud. Or, I may be mentoring one day, in whatever industry sector I will be in. I want to continue to empower and inspire others with the work that I do.

## Thomas Duong Quan Tran



I am majoring in Psychology with a program-of-study in Asian American Studies. I am a 2.8 generation Chinese Vietnamese American from a refugee family. I enjoy being very active – I have practiced Kung Fu and Lion Dance for twenty-one years. I also enjoy rock climbing, playing volleyball, or jogging around the neighborhood. Despite this, I am actually quite the home-body and I love curling up in my bed, listening to music for hours on end.

Prior to attending UMass Boston, I had a background in community work through various organizations such as Asian Community Development Corporation (ACDC), Greater Malden Asian American Community Coalition (GMAACC), and Coalition for Anti-Racism and Equity (CARE). In my involvement, I learned about Asian American history, uncovered pieces of my identity, and recognized the importance of BIPOC solidarity, but I

wanted more. I chose to pursue a program-of-study in the Asian American Studies Program to deepen my understanding of our rich, deep, and diverse experience in America. Classes such as AsAmSt 228L “Asian Women in the U.S.,” AsAmSt 225L “Southeast Asians in the U.S.,” and AsAmSt 270 “Cambodian American Culture and Community” highlighted individuals, significant movements, and historic events that have given me incredible insight about my culture, my history, and my identity that ultimately influenced and changed my world outlook. There is a lack of representation within the general school curriculum and faculty for BIPOC students, and the classes I took in Asian American Studies helped me “reclaim” this time and knowledge. I was also able to meet like-minded individuals focused on solidarity work, and mentors who

guided me with their experience and wisdom. It would not be an understatement to say that becoming involved with the Asian American Studies Program was the single most valuable decision I made at UMass Boston. I am truly grateful.

In the fall, I will be attending the Harvard Graduate School of Education, pursuing school/adjustment counseling, focusing on youth mental health for K-12 students. The aforementioned lack of representation has motivated me to pursue a career in school systems and with involvement in legislative advocacy. I recognize there are many systemic issues in our education system that continue to marginalize our communities of color, and I hope to play an active role in the fight against oppression. I want to be the educator, the activist, and the role model for our children of the future. The Asian American Studies Program has assisted and further affirmed my passion for racial justice and solidarity: oppressed by the same system in both similar and different ways, I came to recognize the importance of "togetherness." United we stand, divided we fall.

## MyLin Tran Le

I am an undergraduate double major in Psychology and Sociology with a program-of-study in Asian American Studies. I am half Vietnamese and half Cambodian, but I identify as Vietnamese American as I was born here in Boston, and my family were immigrants who had come here from Vietnam sometime after the Vietnam war had ended.

Growing up in Malden, I was surrounded by other Asian Americans, but no one ever really talked about the issues that Asian Americans faced in the US. Not even my parents. But when COVID hit, things changed for me. It opened my eyes to so many issues, and I wanted to learn more. From there, I was able to find the Asian American Studies Program and a whole new world of knowledge opened up. I learned more about my Cambodian side and more about my Vietnamese side related to the Vietnam war and the struggles that our community is still dealing with till this day. I have loved every moment that this Program provided for me. The projects that we had to do were amazing and I am so grateful that I was part of them. I always try to recommend this Program to people I meet because I really believe that it is worthwhile. Everyone should know about AsAmSt!!!



I want to work in the psych field, but I am also thinking of working in nonprofits or DCF. I hope to bring what I've learned in AsAmSt and do my best to make a change with other Asian Americans wherever I end up. I hope to stay in touch with the Program and do what I can to help after I have a steady job.

## Allyson Tse

I am graduating with a degree in Business Management and a concentration in Marketing. I was born and raised in Boston and wanted to stay here for college to remain close to family and also because UMB was the more affordable option. I am the second generation of my family in the United States and the second oldest of four children. I registered for the AsAmSt 200 - Intro to Asian American Studies course in my freshman year without thinking too much about it... It turned out to be one of the best decisions I've made during my higher educational journey.



Since I was fortunate enough to find the Program during my freshman year at UMB, I was able to incorporate AsAmSt courses in all of my four years here. From the very first class I took, I knew that I wanted to keep taking more and eventually do the program-of-study. The structure of the intro class told me everything I needed to know. I found a community that I have been longing for my whole life. Not just specifically Asian/Asian American students and faculty, but people who could relate to me and the stories that I had and who were willing to share their own experiences. In every class that I have taken with the Program, I've made new and lasting friends and connections that I wouldn't have been able to make on my own. Through the topics we've discussed and stories we've shared, I have also been able to grow both personally and professionally. The consistent emphasis of connection and self-reflection that is demonstrated within every Asian American Studies class is what persuaded me to do the program-of-study.

For my future plans, I hope to include Asian American Studies work throughout both my personal and professional life. I have often found the topics and concepts that we have learned and discussed in class to reflect and resonate within my personal life, which I wasn't aware of before. I will use my learnings to deeply understand that everyone has different perspectives from my own. I will also continue to maintain the connections I've made with others from Asian American Studies, as they have become more than my classmates, but people I'm glad to call my friends.

## Maylee You (she/her)

I'm a second-generation Cambodian American born and raised in Lowell, MA. I grew up an only child raised by my single mother and my grandma. Having a lot of time to myself as a kid, I grew to be creative. This led to my passion in having a career connected to media. At UMass Boston, I'm majoring in Communications. I wanted to stay close to home while also stepping out of my comfort zone. I wanted to

experience an environment I wasn't familiar with. During my four years at college, I've been able to explore Boston's Asian American communities and really feel connected to working in those spaces. I have been a peer leader at MAP for Health in Boston for over two years and worked as an Alumni Relations and Communications intern at Kwong Kow Chinese School in Chinatown. I also later learned that these are important community organizations with histories that have been connected to other AsAmSt students, faculty, and alumni in the past.



I decided to include a focus on Asian American Studies at UMass Boston because I felt that I owed it to myself to understand more history regarding my identity and what is the Asian American community. I never experienced learning about my culture in an educational space and wanted to take advantage of the opportunity. In fall semester of my sophomore year, I took AsAmSt 270 Cambodian American Culture and Community and AsAmSt 225 – Southeast Asians in the US back-to-back in the same classroom! I felt really empowered by those classes. I really connected to what I was learning. I truly looked forward to going to classes and I've never felt that experience before. My involvement with AsAmSt courses was a steppingstone to finding myself and who I really am. Courses went beyond class materials. I started to feel humanized in these classes due to what I was learning. I became more intentional with my actions, felt more present within my education, and overall, I was just more appreciative. I learned a lot about myself and my peers. I was heavily impacted in building confidence to try working in the community. I began working for an API organization called MAP for Health which completely shifted my career focus

during my college years to work more in local communities in the Boston area. I made it a goal to serve different communities. I don't think I would've built that strength or felt qualified enough without the knowledge I gained in AsAmSt. I've never been in a full classroom with majority Asian students who were learning about their history and each other. It was beyond lectures and homework; I was encouraged to connect with people inside and outside of the classroom.

I now truly strive to be forever surrounded by communities where I can make an impact. I've spent a lot of time with Asian American communities where I'm deeply rooted, so I now hope to explore and gain more education and experience in other communities that are also marginalized or underrepresented. My Asian American Studies connections and lessons will always be useful to me in ways that I want to remember and share with others because I truly have never felt so drawn to coursework. I learned how to grow as an individual and to constantly think about how I can make an impact. I'll always stay involved with Asian American Studies work wherever I go by sharing stories and connecting with people.



## AsAmSt Program Sampling from 2024-2025

### 2025 Chancellor's Award for Distinguished Scholarship -- Elora Halim Chowdhury



Professor Elora Halim Chowdhury, chair of the Department of Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies, is the 2025 recipient of the university's highest faculty honor: the Chancellor's Award for Distinguished Scholarship. Dr. Chowdhury is widely recognized for her critical studies of development which she grounds in both transnational feminist practice and Bangladeshi history, culture, and society. As an AsAmSt-affiliated faculty for the past 20 years, Elora occasionally teaches AsAmSt 226 Becoming South Asians and collaborates with us on interdisciplinary projects. [Left: Elora at the Bangladeshi Student Association's Bangla New Year gathering at UMB in 2016. Her two monographs and three co-edited books appear below.]



### 2025 Chancellor's Award for Distinguished Service -- Zong-Guo Xia

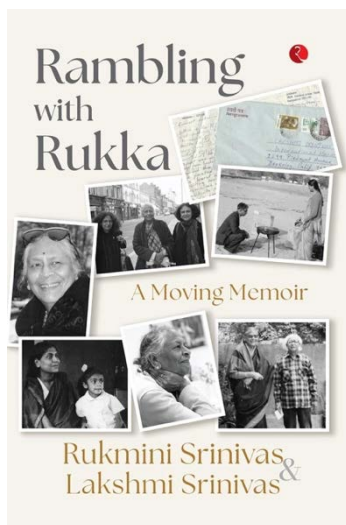


Receiving the 2025 Chancellor's Award for Distinguished Service is School for the Environment Professor Zong-Guo Xia. Dr. Xia's campus leadership roles have included serving as Vice Provost for Research, Dean of Graduate Studies, Chair of the Faculty Council, and much more. Throughout his long, impactful career at UMB beginning in 1993-1998 and continuing from 2009 to the present, Zong-Guo chose wholeheartedly to be affiliated with AsAmSt, and, for several critical years, he was our reporting Dean. He also led the university-wide committee which established the School for Global Inclusion and Social Development (SGISD), the transdisciplinary academic home where AsAmSt has been located since 2014. Zong-Guo's humble Hunan roots, mission-centered dedication, and rigorous vision as both a campus leader and affirming colleague have improved UMB and inspired many. [Above: Zong-Guo at the AsAmSt Endowed Distinguished Professorship reception in 2023 and speaking at the 2012 AsAmSt graduation celebration.]

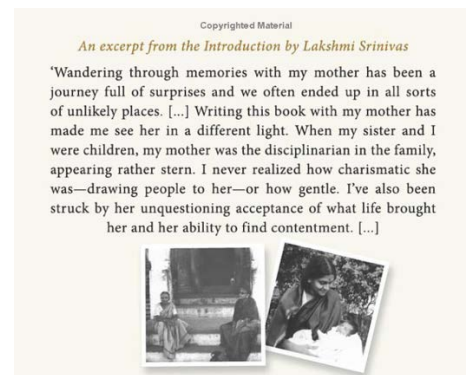
## Core Faculty Contributions



Endowed Distinguished Professor for Asian American Studies, Shirley Tang, and her Story Data Lab premiered [nine new co-produced digital stories](#) focusing on relevant STEM pathways for a crowd of 120 at the Museum of Science in June 2024. This was the third year of Shirley's innovative partnership with UMB's NASA-funded Minority University Research and Education Project. In March 2025, she also co-presented the NASA project's storytelling impacts with Arthur Eisenkraft and Kris Grymonpre at the National Science Teachers Association convention in Philadelphia.



AsAmSt Associate Professor Lakshmi Srinivas's co-authored book, [Rambling with Rukka: A Moving Memoir](#), was published in June 2024 by Rupa Publications, and will be a focal point in Son Ca Lãm's AsAmSt 423 Boston's Asian American Communities course during Fall 2025.



AsAmSt Assistant Professor Son Ca Lãm's first full year of praxis at UMB offered fresh perspectives and inspiring projects across her research, teaching, service, and program-building commitments. In April 2025 she shared her expertise with news stations such as [WGBH](#) about the significance of 50 years of local, multigenerational Vietnamese community history since the Fall of Saigon.

AsAmSt Professor and Program Director, Peter Kiang, briefly showed out with his three Chancellor's medals (Scholarship-2024; Service-2010; Teaching 2007) while making a case for AsAmSt programmatic leadership as a distinguished, long-term scholarly project. His November 2024 talk is online via [UMB's Distinguished Faculty Lectures](#).





## Graduate Student Accomplishments



PhD student in Global Inclusion and Social Development and longtime core staff and Lecturer in AsAmSt, Kim Soun Ty, defended her dissertation proposal in December 2024, titled, "Lead Poisoning in the Cambodian Refugee Community in Lynn, Massachusetts during the 1980s and 1990s". [Pictured left, Kim is introduced by dissertation advisor, Endowed Distinguished Professor for Asian American Studies, Shirley Tang.]



AsAmSt-affiliated doctoral student in Global Inclusion and Social Development, Khong Meng Her [pictured left in Spring 2022 AsAmSt 200], has been selected as a Finalist for the prestigious Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Program to pursue research and documentation within the historic Hmong diasporic community in Northern Thailand. With host support from colleagues at Chiang Mai University, Khong Meng's project, "Clans Among Mountains: Hmong Integration in Northern Thailand After 1993," is still contingent on US funding, but has otherwise been approved based on merit.

Oscar Chen, master's degree student in Public Policy and graduate assistant in AsAmSt, has been selected as the 2025 Public Policy Intern for the MassHire Metro North Workforce Board (MNWB). Oscar [pictured right at the 2024 Khmer Culture Association New Year] provides research support on a range of public-policy issues and legislative agendas related to workforce and business development, career education, and other key issues relevant to underserved communities in the metro North region. He reports directly to MNWB's President and CEO, Chris Albrizio-Lee—our UMB AsAmSt alumnus from 2007.



## Story Data Lab Developments in Asian American Studies

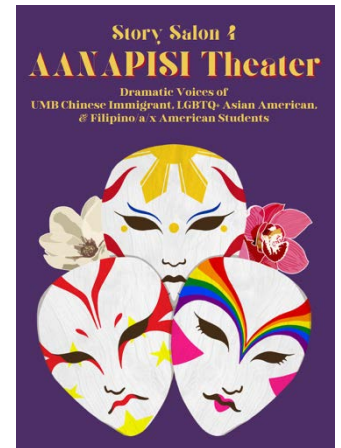
With a high-capacity team and robust support through her Endowed Distinguished Professorship, Shirley Tang led several research, teaching, documentation, and production efforts during 2024-25. Working in the AsAmSt Story Data Lab this year, Shirley's staff included: Ammany Ty, Nia Duong, Arlene Vu, Kim Soun Ty, Asa Peters, Tommy Lam, and Parmita Gurung, along with undergraduate students: Vi Thai, Joelle De La Cruz, Naomi Layon, and Emma Soch.

Through her Fall 2024 AsAmSt 397 Applied Research course, advanced students conceptualized and coordinated three story salons focusing on specific AANAPISI



undergraduate populations at UMB whose stories and experiences are critically important but poorly-documented. Powerful content from each story salon was then integrated into dramatic story performance scripts for staging as AANAPISI Theater. In the tradition of Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed which seeks interventions through audience-actor

interactions to address real-life issues, the AANAPISI Theater performance in December 2024 reached a packed audience of students, faculty and staff, and modeled an immersive, in-person method for engaging with story data.



In May, the 2025 Digital Storytelling in Asian American Studies Festival premiered 17 new video co-productions by students from AsAmSt 370 Asian American Media Literacy. An audience of 120 attended, including AsAmSt 370 alumni: Kwokin Ou (2010), Victor Sok (2012), and Stanley La (2013) who came to support this new generation of student coproducers—many of whom documented deep COVID-19 pandemic impacts across their diverse identities and multilingual real-life-real stories.

Beyond course-based co-production, Shirley's multi-year grant-supported partnership commitments such as the NASA PATHS project is continuing through 2025. In addition, quality attention to an ambitious, new Story Lab series of Asian American Studies Masterclass Productions is in progress, beginning with Masterclass #1 by Professor Paul Watanabe, with assistance from Celine Voyard and Pratna Kem, focusing on the impacts of the World War II Incarceration on Japanese Americans. Completion and release are expected in 2026. Separately, Shirley's initial stages of planning to host an AsAmSt Story Data Lab Artist/Scholar-in-Residence in 2026 are also underway.



## Piloting Filipina/o American Studies: AsAmSt 250G is in the Heart



With historic shortboarding skill adeptly at work, the AsAmSt Program continued to ride a multi-year wave of momentum with Filipina/o/x students who demonstrated clear, coherent interests in support of Filipino American Studies at UMB. We provided multiple forms of

support, ranging from accessing relevant networks such as the Filipino National Historical Society to convening a Filipina/o/x student-centered story salon via Shirley Tang's Fall 2024 AsAmSt 397 Data Story Lab, and—most decisively—to adapt AsAmSt 250G to pilot [a dedicated first-ever course in Spring 2025](#), co-taught by Sơn Ca Lâm and Pratna Kem with undergrad TA Fasha Banson (President of Hoy! Pinoy! and co-founder of the Filipino American Experience platform). Students' passionate projects and heartfelt reflections were on full display in May 2025—conceptualized as contributing to a collective Kapwa Atlas by “mapping the contours of diaspora, community, and home across space and time.”



## Classroom-Community Connections in Children's Storybooks



In February 2025, local Khmer American author-educator, Chanda Ouk Wolf, presented her new children's book, [A Dozen Delicious Donuts](#), for a special combined session with Kim Soun Ty's AsAmSt 223 Asians in the US class joining Susan Tan's AsAmSt/ENGL 350L Asian American Literary Voices.

## Appreciating Boston's Vietnamese Diasporic Community at Fifty



Boston's contributions to global recognition of 50 years of Vietnamese diasporic community legacy since the Fall of Saigon were epic throughout 2024-2025. While distinctive multi-year community processes of preserving refugee stories and achieving a public memorial for Boston's Little Saigon Cultural District continue to be co-led respectively by Linh-Phuong Vũ (AsAmSt Lecturer and PhD student), and Ngọc-Trần Vũ (former AsAmSt instructor), the community's 50th commemorative event on April 26 inspired and re-grounded 700+ attendees from all generations through richly bilingual, immersive exhibits and performances that centered refugee memory, presence, voice, and homeplace-making. Linh's multiple skills and sensibilities in community engagement, event planning, and exhibition design were in full effect, as were the expertise of AsAmSt Prof. Sơn Ca Lâm and the energies of dozens of AsAmSt students and alumni, especially from AsAmSt 390 whose Spring semester-long community internships supervised by Linh at Boston Little Saigon focused intensively on exhibition planning and production.

Reflecting on the community commemoration, Kim-Dung Nguyen, a second-wave refugee and



original alumna who took AsAmSt 323 Asian Minorities in America in 1987, noted feeling “very sentimental and emotional and also very strong and settled,” and that she wants to write more stories herself. Meanwhile, next to UMB on April 30, Mr. Thiêm Lê approached the Dorchester Vietnam Veterans Memorial in uniform, still with military posture at age 70. Having taken AsAmSt 225 Southeast Asians in the US with Prof. Peter Kiang in 1999 as an HO refugee, Mr. Lê warmly exclaimed, “Oh, my teacher!” upon seeing Peter among the crowd.



Moved by stories of escape, loss, and remembrance, and published in time for the 50th commemoration, *Sea of Fireflies* is an original, fully-bilingual, illustrated children's book, co-authored by Long Huỳnh, Vy Phạm, and Kelly Trần, based on their Spring 2023 course project in AsAmSt 294 Resources for Vietnamese American Studies led by Linh-Phuong Vũ with © 2025 by AsAmSt.





## Lynn as a Schoolplace for Khmer Family/Community-Centered Genocide Education



During the second year of our carefully-crafted, long-term partnership with Lynn Public Schools through the MA Genocide Education program, Kim Soun Ty led a series of content-rich professional development training workshops for LPS teachers and facilitated activities that directly connected LPS-AsAmSt students and alumni. Focusing on Cambodian genocide history and specific legacies for Khmer family/community contexts in Lynn, Kim worked closely with Kristen Tabacco, the LPS History Curriculum Coordinator, throughout 2024-25.



December 2024: Cambodian shadow puppet performances by students in Kim Soun Ty's AsAmSt 270 Cambodian American Culture and Community course with Lynn educators and LPS alumni attending.



January 2025: Professional development at Lynn Tech engaging 60+ LPS middle/high school social studies teachers with our Cambodian American Studies curriculum design, pedagogy, and student voices.

May 2025: Four teachers and 19 students from Lynn Classical High School visited UMB for an immersive curriculum activity on documenting the Cambodian genocide. Current Khmer American AsAmSt students from Lynn also related peer experiences about family- and community-centered pedagogies and first-generation higher educational pathways.



## Advancing Chen Family Legacies

Through the Chen Family's inspiring and deeply reaffirming investment, the intentions of the Stanley and Josephine Chen Community Scholars (SJCCS) program re-emerged fully during 2024-25. A total of 17 AsAmSt students, including six immigrants and eleven US-born with immigrant/refugee parents from Cambodian, Chinese, Filipino, Gujarati, Khmer, and Tajiki cultural backgrounds, received discretionary SJCCS scholarship support through AsAmSt. Nearly all are first-generation in college with financial need. As awardees, individual students assume varied leadership and service commitments: some intern in community settings; others serve as teaching/research assistants supervised by AsAmSt faculty; still others take part in campus advocacy or documentation projects such as assessing needs and mobilizing resources relevant to Chinese immigrant students or Asian American LGBTQ+ students. After an initial orientation, one awardee noted, "I was just reflecting on learning more about the SJCCS program, and I found it to be an emotional and heartwarming experience, especially seeing all those photos and videos. Getting to know the history and legacy of Stanley and Josephine and having the opportunity to be a part of it after understanding its origins and mission, makes it even more meaningful."



Just as importantly, Nía Dương—herself a recipient of SCCS support in 2016-17 as an undergraduate—was hired in late October 2024 as the AsAmSt Program's Student/Community Engagement Coordinator. In this role, Nía serves as a key point of contact for current and future SJCCS scholarship recipients as well as for SCCS alumni and community partners from the past 15 years.

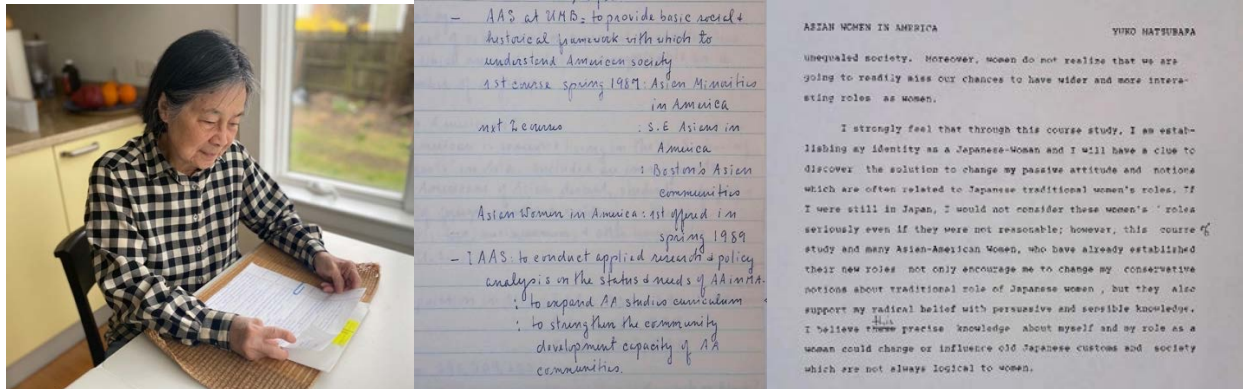
## AANAPISI Federal Funding and Campus Continuity Concerns



Amidst unprecedented uncertainties for federal education funding in 2025, staff and students within the Asian American Resource Office (AARO) hosted a dynamic AANAPISI Showcase in April to spotlight many of the vital campus programs, services, and projects supported by UMB's AANAPISI grants from the US Department of Education that may be at risk in the coming year and beyond.



## Archival Development – New Donor Collections and Alumni Reconnections



In December 2024, Panit Satyasai-Crimmin [above left]—a long-retired UMB reference librarian and one of the AsAmSt Program’s earliest instructors—donated her personal collection of teaching materials to be digitized for our archives. An immigrant from Thailand who was among the initial volunteers for the Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence in the early 1990s, Panit eagerly and effectively taught Asian Women in the US (AsAmSt 228L) between 1993 to 1996. Originally co-created by Vivian Wu-Wong in 1989, AsAmSt 228L has provided an accessible and empowering entry-point for thousands of students since the 1990s, and is still actively taught today. Panit’s meticulously-kept course materials include handwritten lecture outlines, syllabi and readings, exemplary student papers, inspiring notes of student gratitude, clear evidence of Writing Proficiency Requirement struggles, and listings of community-based presenters. Her collection provides invaluable insights from a foundational period in the development of AsAmSt at UMB. Oscar Chen painstakingly completed the archival digitization process in April 2025. The original materials have been returned to Panit with our sincere appreciation.



The value of Panit’s archival donation goes beyond historical preservation and context-rich curriculum analysis. Alumnae who remain in touch are among the students whose papers and notes are in Panit’s folders. For example, after discovering a Spring 1996 paper by Yuko (Matsubara) Yakushijin (now RN, PhD), we forwarded it to Yuko who is Department Chair of Nursing, Pediatric Nursing at Ehime University’s Graduate School of Medicine in Ehime, Japan. Dr. Yuko immediately replied, “I’m grateful to my teacher for carefully preserving my report from 30 years ago. When I read it again... I realized that

the Asian Women’s Studies class had a very strong influence on my thinking and values.” Yuko also included a photo with her own students from Ehime University’s recent commencement. Though not yet coded with metadata tags, many such moments of caring (re)collection/connection that link teachers and students in AsAmSt are evidenced in Panit’s new donation of mid-1990s AsAmSt 228 teaching archives.

The Asian American Studies Program recognizes with appreciation:

- our continued physical presence for 32+ years within the Phillis Wheatley Peters Building;
- each of our core AsAmSt faculty, staff, and students as well as our committed donors, alumni, community partners, and field trip or classroom presenters, plus all who participated in our hosted reception at the April 2025 national Association for Asian American Studies conference.
- AsAmSt alumnus Kinh Ha, who transitioned from serving as Family Engagement Coordinator at Âu Cơ Preschool to a full-time professional staff role as an Advisor in UMB's Academic & Career Engagement and Success Center; and AsAmSt alumnus Husnain Shah who was selected as the 2025-26 Simmons University Library Research Fellow in conjunction with his admission to the school's MS program in Library and Information Science.
- UMB graduate degree accomplishments in May 2025 by AsAmSt alumni: Juan Carlo Gaspar whose capstone project, "Bridging Generations: Transdisciplinary Perspectives on 1.5 Generation Filipinos/Filipino Americans" earned the Award for Excellence in Global Inclusion and Social Development; Jaely Pereria and Anthony Nguyen whose Master of Public Administration capstone projects are respectively titled: "Looking Back to Look Forward: A Study of the Vietnamese Refugee Experience in Massachusetts Over 50 Years: 1975 to 2025" and "The Current State of Vietnamese Americans in Massachusetts: A Study of Current Engagement and Integration of Vietnamese Americans in American Society;" and by former AsAmSt staff, Nguyễn Minh Nghĩa, who defended her Applied Linguistics PhD dissertation, "Storytelling Literacy Development from a Sociocultural Theory Perspective: Stories from the Vietnamese Diaspora".
- always reliable staff assistance by Sarah Paterson, Iris Martínez, Berenise Reyes Albino, Steve Ward, Ivy Bui, Frances Chow, Paloma Britt, Gary Chan, Trieu Ly, Vivian Tran, Quan Nguyen, Joe Ly, Molly Pedriali, Alison Duffy, Dee McNamee, Ryan McDonald, Jessica Holden, and others.
- UMB alumnus and former AsAmSt Lecturer, Giles Li, who was promoted from Senior Program Officer to Director of the Barr Foundation's Arts + Creativity Program in May 2025.
- the sustained leadership for our US Dept of Education AANAPISI grant activities, by co-PIs Peter Kiang, Paul Watanabe, and Shirley Tang; AARO staff led by Sara Hoang with Karen Chi, Sokpagna Chuon, and Helen Ngo; and our sister AANAPISI colleagues at Bunker Hill Community College, led by Profs. Maria Puente and Aurora Bautista with President Pam Eddinger.

Please visit UMB's Asian American Studies Program [here](#).

For community news and fresh AsAmSt content creation, see: [IG](#) and [FB](#).

View AsAmSt graduation booklets from 2008 to current year [here](#).

Donate to the Asian American Studies Program Capacity Fund [here](#).

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