

AMERICAN CENTER FOR MONGOLIAN STUDIES

The mission of the American Center for Mongolian Studies (ACMS) is to support the development of Mongolian and Inner Asian Studies and the dissemination of knowledge about this little known, but important, region. Inner Asia includes Mongolia and the border areas of China, Russia and Central Asia, such as Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, Buryatia, Tuva and eastern Kazakhstan. The ACMS is a rapidly growing consortium of U.S. academic institutions, including colleges and universities, museums and research institutes. It qualifies as an IRS 501 (c) (3) non-profit educational organization, and receives over 50 percent of its funds from private and public U.S. sources.

The ACMS plans to open a full-time, permanent office and library in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia in spring 2004 to support academic research and study in the region. The ACMS is being developed in close cooperation with the Council of American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC), and once established, will become the first member of CAORC in East and Central Asia. U.S. Department of Education funds in the amount of \$166,612 over 48 months are requested to support the development of an American Overseas Research Center in Mongolia.

The ACMS will play a crucial role in the development of Inner Asian Studies by creating a central point of contact and support in the region, by providing an avenue for dissemination of information, and by supporting graduate and post-graduate fellowships. The ACMS office and library in Ulaanbaatar will offer logistical support to students and researchers, a liaison with the Mongolian government and academic institutions, a meeting place for U.S., Mongolian and international scholars, a venue for presentations and conferences, and a repository for research reports, dissertations, books, journals and other published and unpublished material. The ACMS will help develop language-training programs in Mongolia for U.S. students, a crucial need given the limited opportunities to learn Mongolian and other regional languages such as Tuvan in the United States. The ACMS will collaborate with other AORCs and organizations to link research in Inner Asia to other related areas of the world, including North America, the Middle East, and Central, East Asia, and South Asia.

The development of an American Overseas Research Center in Mongolia will address important issues of significance to the United States. The ACMS will support research, language and cultural studies that will lead to a greater understanding of the countries, people and environment in Inner Asia, an understudied region with both direct and indirect ties to the United States. The United States and Mongolia have a shared interest in the development of close ties and cultural exchanges. Mongolia is situated between two of the world's superpowers, China and Russia, and on the eastern edge of Central Asia. Mongolia has the most open political and economic system in the region, and looks to the United States as a key supporter of its transition away from Communism.

Since the fall of Communism in 1990, more and more American scholars have been drawn to Mongolia for research and study because of the country's open political and economic system, its pristine steppe environment, its role in world history, and its enduring nomadic culture. Since 1990, over 70 Ph.D. dissertations and Master's theses have been completed on topics related to Inner Asia, and numerous other graduate and post-graduate researchers are active in the region.