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Professor chosen to participate on Fulbright project

By **Dawn Pauli**, contributing writer

Linda Benson, professor of history, is one of 10 professors selected from throughout the United States to participate in a Fulbright Hays Group Project administered through the University of Pittsburgh's Asian Studies Center.

Traveling by plane, bus, jeep, boat and horseback, Benson will visit all the major regions of Mongolia in June.

The goal of the project is to create a searchable Web-based database aimed at university students, but accessible by anyone interested in the history and contemporary status of Mongolia.

Each of the participants will focus on a specific topic, with Benson examining women's status and gender issues, particularly since the fall of the USSR in 1991.

"This project fits well with my teaching at OU and with my research on minorities in China," Benson said. "Several of the classes I teach on China include at least some Mongolian history, and this experience will enhance that component greatly. Getting a Fulbright for academics is prestigious, so I'm honored and pleased to be chosen."

The group will visit the national capital of Ulaan Baatar, where they will meet government officials, non-governmental organization representatives and scholars. In addition, they also will visit areas where on-going, internationally funded research is in progress by groups such as the Smithsonian and Academy of Natural Sciences, which is working on the Mongolian Biodiversity and Ecology Project.

Also on the itinerary is the Tuvan area of the northwest, the ruins of the Mongol imperial city at Karakorum, Buddhist temples and holy mountains, and visits to shamans and reindeer herders.

Benson's area of expertise is modern China. She has written about the Kazakh people of northwestern China in "China's Last Nomads" and will visit the Kazakh summer pastures in western Mongolia as part of the project. She has written three other books on aspects of modern Chinese history and just completed the manuscript of another about women travelers in northwestern China in the 1920s.

"The award of this very competitive Fulbright grant to Dr. Benson is an additional recognition of her work on China and planned work in Mongolia. This effort will assist her in writings on Mongolia, a region that has remained largely unexplored by Western scholars," said Virinder Moudgil, vice president for Academic Affairs and provost. "This coveted assignment is consistent with our declared mission of providing global experience to our students through such undertakings."

SUMMARY

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