



CHINA GLOBALIZATION IMMERSION PROGRAM

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MAJOR: ACCOUNTING

LOCATION: ZHUHAI, CHINA

DATES: May 26, 2015 – June 12, 2015

GRADUATION: August 2015

SCHOLARSHIPS RECEIVED: AASCU Scholarship for \$500 & Vietnamese Ball Scholarship for \$500

My experience in the UW-Eau Claire China Immersion Program was unforgettable. The memories and friendships I made and the cultural knowledge I gained in such a short time period will stay with me forever. I was able to witness first-hand the complexities, similarities, and differences of a culture that would usually be described as vastly different from our own here in the U.S.

From what I saw, the Chinese people are a complex bunch. Many of the qualities I observed seemed like oxymorons, yet worked for this culture. People I saw and met seemed forward, yet reserved; passive, yet blunt; collective, yet competitive; slower paced, yet pushy in lines; biggest eaters I know, yet thinner than most people, and the list goes on. However, even with the cultural differences, the student buddies from the China exchange program and our U.S. group hit it off immediately. I have never before witnessed such kindness and generosity that these individuals showed our group, especially not with strangers. Words cannot describe the lengths these students went to in order to be good hosts and were accommodating to the greatest extent. Once it was time to say goodbye, we were anything but strangers. I have made some lasting friendships through this program and continually miss the daily interactions with the Chinese students now that I am back in the U.S.

However, it was not always smooth sailing. Due to some cultural differences, tensions were sometimes high. One example in particular I can recall is one of the first nights there, we were trying to decide what to do for dinner; this should have been a simple decision, but instead became the most stressful, drawn out task. The Chinese students thought everyone would eat together, while the U.S. students thought we would separate into smaller groups. They kept mentioning how it was going to rain and seemed very concerned, and we did not see how this would affect much. They were trying to please everyone, and we were also trying to make it

easier on them. There were miscommunications galore, and no one ended up eating dinner that night until after 9pm. Some even went without dinner in order to avoid the struggle. Luckily, we improved this communication as the trip continued. Decisions became less stressful as we learned how to communicate more effectively and interpret through the cultural differences. I now understand how cross cultural negotiations in business can be so difficult, if we couldn't even figure out something as simple as dinner. Although, I have to admit I did find some of the minor miscommunications very humorous and enjoyable.

Another difference that was evident on the trip was the collectivist versus individualistic culture. It was very apparent that the U.S. students liked to recuperate after a long day or strenuous activity by being alone or relaxing in the hotel room. This is how we needed to recharge.

Whereas, the Chinese students liked to get together and socialize, and that is how they gained energy. Collectivism was also very prominent in the meals we ate. Every meal was set up in family style, with a large turn table in the middle with many large dishes for everyone to share. I think the U.S. students would have sometimes preferred to just order our own individual dishes instead. I did like the socializing aspect of meal times, however, instead of it just being about food it was more about interacting and enjoying each other's company. I know this is something my family could learn some tips from the Chinese culture about.

Relationships and power structure is another cultural difference that I witnessed on this trip.

Power can be seen everywhere in China from who speaks, to where people sit, to the location of a glass while raising glasses for a toast. However, there seemed to be drastic differences in opinions and manner between the younger and older generations regarding power relationships. The power of the government and the role it played in everyday life seemed more prevalent or restricting than in the U.S. Internet and shows are much more restricted and blocked. The ideas

and opinions of the people on certain topics or elements seemed to be very influenced by governmental beliefs as well. Also in the subway there was propaganda type videos displayed outside the windows. Although we could not understand what was being said, it seemed a bit uncomfortable and too controlling with my freedom of opinion type mindset.

I believe the difference in opinions between generations could have something to do with U.S. influence and exposure that the younger generations have seen. In the U.S., power is not as strict or displayed as prevalently as it is in China and it is generally okay to question superiors and authority. For example, one of the Chinese students told me she wished they could ask questions during class and wished that her professors were more accessible like they are in the U.S. I also witnessed the U.S. media and the role U.S. pop culture plays in the Chinese culture. Movies, music, television and even some dress all came from U.S. origin. There were many U.S. or other global restaurants and store chains as well.

On the other hand, most products in the U.S. are made in China. Therefore, each decision that U.S. companies make in purchases and trade will have some sort of impact on the companies in China that are producing the products. We were able to visit some local businesses while in China and some of the items we witnessed were quite sad. The wages of workers were not disclosed, we witnessed workers being exposed to radiation and other unsafe working environments, and many of the workers lived on site. This is all partially influenced by the U.S. need for continually lower prices coming from cheap labor rates in China. However, the U.S. could learn from the Chinese precision and quality control of their products. I believe there are many things that U.S. and China could learn from each other, and if done right, continued globalization could have a great impact.

For these reasons, I believe this program is invaluable. It continues to develop a relationship and bond between Jinan University in Zhuhai China and UW-Eau Claire in USA. These relationships allow direct exposure to another culture and lifestyle. It allows the students and faculty involved to learn from each other. The new found knowledge and techniques can then be passed on to others in each home country. This is where innovation begins and how UW Eau Claire can help its students thrive in the global arena.

This trip was phenomenal, and I would absolutely encourage future students to participate in it. After attending this trip, I see the Chinese culture differently. I do not hold the same assumptions and stereotypes as when I left. I now think of the Chinese culture as extremely warm, caring, and inviting. The students from Jinan University have left me with nothing but great impressions of their culture. I will also think more about the products I buy and consume and how this can have a global impact. I will try to buy more products that support companies that provide clean and safe working conditions, higher wages, environmentally friendly practices, and so on. I will also think about where products end up after they are used. In the future I would also like to work abroad or in a global context through international business. I hope to use the experiences I have learned from this study abroad to help ease my transition in the future.

Thank you for this wonderful opportunity!

Pictures:



This picture is actually taken after the actual picture we were trying for. We were attempting a jumping picture and this is the aftermath, but even so I absolutely love this picture. I think this captures the chaos and enjoyment of the trip as a whole. It is a great summary of our trip by displaying both the site-seeing aspect and us spending time all together as a group and having fun.



This picture displays another important aspect of the trip, the business visits. We were generally not allowed to take pictures in the other areas at most of the businesses we went to, only the public front areas. However, many of the tours they allowed us into private areas and we were able to see behind the scenes at these places. The company in this picture made printers. It was really neat to see how businesses in another country operate.