

MSU-China Fellowship for Enhancing Global Understanding Program
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The Office of the Dean, College of Education
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Southwest University

May 13 - June 4, 2011 Study Tour
Beijing – Chongqing – Shanghai, China

This was the third year of the MSU China Study Tour established with the College of Education at Southwest University (SWU) in Chongqing, China. Through a formal partnership agreement signed in 2008 by Dr. Carole Ames, Dean of the College of Education at MSU and Dr. Jin Yule, Dean of the College of Education at SWU, an international scholars exchange and study program was created to help future researchers develop a global perspective on educational policies and practices. The program is designed to provide graduate students pursuing doctoral study in education an opportunity to learn about and study the educational system and culture in China. Chinese scholars visiting MSU through the exchange program have comparable experiences.

The Fellowship for Enhancing Global Understanding program is coordinated by MSU and it also includes doctoral students enrolled in the Colleges of Education at the University of Washington (UW) and the University of Delaware (UD). Each university is responsible for recruiting and selecting doctoral candidates and for providing financial support. The 2011 group included 16 students with a gender balance of 10 females and six males. Nine MSU students from the teacher education, curriculum and instruction, education policy, measurement and quantitative methods, K-12 administration, education psychology and technology, and higher, adult and lifelong education programs were selected. Four UW students from the higher education and learning sciences programs and three UD students from the human development and family studies and special education programs joined the study tour. MSU consultant Dan Schultz serves as the China program director and he interviewed and selected each of the MSU participants. He has led the 2009, 2010 and 2011 MSU China Study Tours.

Program Organization Design

Prior to departure, the program participants were provided briefing materials on the itinerary, the planned cultural experiences and the expectations for them as visiting scholars. As part of their orientation, the MSU, UW and UD students participated in a series of conference calls and online discussions to help prepare them for their visit to China. Each host university provided essential support and coordination services, and local briefings with past MSU China Study Tour participants were arranged. Documents and e-mail updates were provided through MSU's Web-based Angel communication system. A recommended reading list of articles and books concerning globalization and its impact on education, and information about China and its education system was provided.

This study abroad opportunity was designed to provide an intensive blend of academic and cultural experiences for the participants. The travel itinerary included scheduled activities and

briefings in Beijing, Chongqing and Shanghai. Guided visits to significant historic sites, monuments and exhibits contributed to better understanding Chinese culture. Academic lectures, briefings with education organizations, discussions with graduate students at Beijing Normal University (BNU) and SWU provided rich context and essential background information. Visits to primary and middle schools and conversations with teachers, school leaders and students offered valuable insights into China and its education system.

Overview of the Academic Program

Briefings were provided by the Beijing International Chinese College, the Beijing Association of Non-government Education and the Chongqing Municipal Education Commission. The students participated in a discussion with graduate students from BNU's School of Educational Technology and the Institute of Modern Technology.

The academic and cultural program component at SWU was developed by the Office of International Programs in the College of Education in collaboration with MSU. With the direct support of the Dean of the SWU College of Education, a series of academic lectures by leading faculty and administrators were scheduled for the participants throughout the two-week campus experience. The lectures addressed a broad spectrum of Chinese education topics, including history, the moral development of students, ethnic minority issues, current research on pedagogy and curriculum, special education reform and teacher preparation programs and policy initiatives.

Student Academic Presentations

Each of the U.S. graduate students was required to present or co-present an academic lecture at SWU. Prior to departure the students proposed topics that reflected their current research interests and an online forum was created to help refine the proposals. In keeping with the spirit of the program, the MSU, UD and UW students were encouraged to collaborate on the presentations and approach topics from multiple perspectives to ensure that the lectures were effectively communicated and understood by an international audience. For 2011, the students presented a series of seven collaborative lectures.

Faculty Mentors

Each U.S. program participant was assigned a SWU faculty mentor to work with. Assignments were made based on the student's program of study, expressed research interest area and faculty availability. These mentor/student assignments offered unique opportunities for the exchange of ideas and professional relationship building. In addition, each faculty mentor assigned teams of 2-3 graduate students to support and assist the U.S. students.

School Visits and Academic Salons

A series of scheduled school visits in urban and rural settings provided a variety of insights into China and its education system. The school visits offered opportunities to observe classes, interact with students and teachers and have wide ranging discussions with school leaders. These primary and middle school visits enabled the group to examine school facilities, ask questions about the daily schedule and curriculum, explore the use of technology by students and teachers and observe teacher and student engagement. Some of the U.S. students were invited to visit special schools through contacts made by their faculty mentors. The group also participated in

academic salons designed to encourage comparative discussions between the U.S., Chinese and other international students attending SWU.

Cultural Activities and Support Services

An essential component of the China Study Tour is the set of cultural activities and site visits arranged for the visiting scholars. Opportunities to tour museums, observe traditional art forms and architecture and experience daily life in China greatly enhanced the cultural understanding of the program participants. The 2011 itinerary included visits to the Chinese National Museum, Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City, the Great Wall, the Ming Tombs, the 2008 Summer Olympic Park, the Temple of Heaven complex, some historic villages, the Chongqing Municipal Zoo, the Three Gorges Museum, the Dazu Rock Carvings, the Shanghai Museum of Chinese Art and Culture, the Shanghai Municipal Planning Authority Exposition, Yu Yuan Gardens, Buddhist temples and a dinner cruise on the Yangtze and Jialing Rivers hosted by SWU.

Impressions, Observations, and Recommendations

In March 2011 an earthquake and a tsunami devastated northern Japan and in addition to interrupting commerce, created high levels of radiation. At that stage of the China study tour planning, there was a great deal of concern about having the participants travel through Japan. As a result, for safety considerations all of the international flights were booked to avoid travel via Japan. However, this created a broader window for participant arrivals in Beijing, created some hotel check-in delays and reduced the time available for planned events in Beijing.

The growing number of personal cars in China has created significant traffic delays and problems in arranging ground transport for briefings, school visits and cultural activities. More travel time is required to get to scheduled events, particularly in Beijing and Shanghai. Lodging for the study tour participants in Beijing, Chongqing and Shanghai was arranged in modern full-service hotels. Given the growing traffic delays, the location of some hotels may be changed.

The faculty lectures at SWU continue to be an essential part of the academic program. The SWU faculty members who have visited MSU through this exchange program are deeply committed to sharing their expertise, hospitality and friendship with the U.S. student participants. Several of these faculty members provide academic lectures, serve as faculty mentors and assign their graduate students to serve as guides, translators and cultural interpreters. Feedback from the students suggests that the sequencing of some of these presentations could be changed to better place historical events and their impact on the Chinese education system in context.

Next Steps

In September 2011 MSU will welcome the third cohort of SWU visiting scholars as part of this global exchange program. There will be several opportunities for the MSU doctoral students who have participated in the China Study Tour to work with these new visiting scholars and help facilitate their understanding of the U.S. education system and western culture.

Summary of the May-June 2011

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Prepared by Dan Schultz, Program Director

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