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Exploring Confucian and Daoist Wisdom and Understanding Contemporary China

In January 2025, Shandong First Medical University organized a study tour titled Perceiving China: Exploring Confucian and Daoist Cultures in Qufu, Tai'an, Qingdao, and Beijing. Under the theme of Ancient Chinese Wisdom and Its Contemporary Value, the tour attracted students who had enrolled in the courses on Confucianism and Daoism in China in the Asian Studies Program at Rollins College, Florida, the United States.



On January 1, the students arrived at the first stop Qufu, the hometown of Confucius. At the Temple of Confucius, they took part in a sacrificial ritual and gained insights into the origin and development of Confucianism, Confucius' engagement in scholarship, education, writing, and governance as well as his commitment to virtue, peace, and harmony. They experienced the rite of apprenticeship, donned traditional Chinese clothing Hanfu, and learned the art of binding bamboo strips to make ancient Chinese books, engaging in a dialogue with the millennia-old wisdom.

In Tai'an, the second stop, the students started exploring the fusion of Confucianism and Daoism. Mount Tai is not only an important symbol of Confucianism, but also one of the sacred sites of Daoism. Before the climb, the group listened to a lecture on Confucian culture and Mount Tai, learning about the ties of Confucius and Confucianism with

the mountain. During the climb, they were impressed by the harmony between Mount Tai's natural landscape and human landscape, which gave them a deeper understanding of Mount Tai's unique appeal and ancient Chinese philosophical ideas such as "the unity between man and nature" and "revering the Heaven and caring for others."

The young visitors from America were also offered a course on traditional martial arts. Under the guidance of Dr. Tang Hongfu, an inheritor of the intangible cultural heritage of two-handed swordsmanship, the students practiced basic moves, experienced the philosophical wisdom of balance between toughness and softness in martial arts, and learned how to express the essence of Confucianism and Daoism through body movements.



In an engaging traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) class, both Chinese and American students learned the basic diagnostic methods of observation, listening, questioning, and pulse-taking. They even tried acupuncture themselves. In the interaction, the American students showed great interest in the philosophy underlying TCM.

At the foot of Mount Tai, the students visited a village in a new style, engaged with local intangible heritage through shadow puppetry and tofu-making, and appreciated the charm of traditional Chinese culture. "We're so glad to visit rural China," they said. "The murals and the cultural square are truly impressive—this is an amazing experience."



By visiting Mount Laoshan and the Tsingtao Beer Museum, the group explored both the natural and historical culture of Qingdao. They not only learned about China's regional culture and traditions, but also experienced the modern features of the city. At Taiqing Palace, a sacred site of Daoism, they heard an introduction about the history and philosophy of Daoism and its influence on Chinese culture. Upon learning of Tsingtao Beer as a product of the fusion of German brewing techniques and local Chinese culture, the students remarked that they were witnessing the fruit of interaction between Chinese and Western cultures and came to realize the significance of mutual learning between civilizations.

The study tour enabled the American students to appreciate deeply the unique appeal of ancient Chinese wisdom. They realized that Chinese civilization is both ancient and dynamic, full of wisdom and vitality, and that Confucianism and Daoism still hold great relevance today, providing insights into the relationships between man and nature, and between individuals and society. In a globalized world, they are sources of inspiration for cultural exchanges. In the future, the students hope to apply this ancient wisdom to their own studies and lives in an effort to contribute to cultural exchanges between China and the United States.

Zhi-Xing Chongqing: the first U.S. youth delegation from Silicon Valley to visit Chongqing

On January 3, 2025, at the dawn of the New Year, 28 students and faculty from 14 schools and universities—including UC Berkeley and Clayton Valley Charter High School—arrived in Chongqing as members of the first U.S. Youth Exchange Delegation from Silicon Valley, to participate in the "Zhi-Xing Chongqing" study tour program themed "Greeting Spring in the Mountain City". Full of anticipation and curiosity, they embarked on a two-week educational journey in this captivating city. The program was organized by the Chongqing Education Association for International Exchange and co-hosted by Chongqing Jiaotong University and Chongqing Nankai Middle School.



The delegation made its first stop at Chongqing Nankai Middle School, marking the official launch of the school's international exchange program for 2025. In the two weeks that ensued, the group delved deeply into the vast expanse of Chongqing, gaining an all-dimensional understanding of China's profound historical and cultural heritage and dynamic modernization.

Cultural bonds and connected hearts foster deeper friendships. Throughout its visit, the delegation engaged in a wide range of exchange activities with students from

Chongqing Jiaotong University, Chongqing University of Chinese Medicine, Sichuan Fine Arts Institute, Chongqing Nankai Middle School, Chongqing Nankai Liang Jiang Secondary School, Chongqing Banan Yucai Experimental Secondary School, and Chongqing Dazu Secondary School. They explored topics such as Chongqing's reputation as the "City of Bridges" and the global evolution of bridge engineering, the development of traditional Chinese medicine and its contrasts with Western medical practices, and the artistic elegance of Chinese calligraphy. The group also engaged in traditional cultural activities, including paper cutting, martial arts, tea ceremony, and pottery making. The ice-breaking activity, shared classes, and joint practice of Chinese recess exercises for the first time left the American students with a truly rich and unforgettable experience.

Sports build friendship while understanding strengthens trust. At Banan Yucai Experimental Secondary School, the visiting students participated in a refreshing friendly swimming match with their Chinese counterparts. Through the competition, both sides not only showcased their athletic spirit and vitality, but also strengthened mutual understanding and trust.



Illuminating cultures connects the Chinese and American youth heart to heart. At Ciqikou Ancient Town, the students felt as if they had traveled through time and space to encounter a gem of historical charm in the modern

city. With needle and thread in hand, the faculty and students experienced firsthand the art of Luanzhen embroidery, a UNESCO-listed intangible cultural heritage. They also discovered the exquisite craftsmanship of Shu embroidery and the unique allure of traditional Chinese handicrafts. At the Three Gorges Museum, the delegation, following the course of history, explored the evolution of Bayu culture over millennia and witnessed the rise and rapid development of modern Chongqing. The visit to the Stilwell Museum offered a touching reminder of the deep friendship between the Chinese and American peoples in the annals of history.

Wandering through the narrow alleys and steep stone steps of Longmenhao Old Street and Xiahaoli, the delegation personally experienced Chongqing's distinctive mountainous landscape and its rich cultural ambiance. At Chongqing Sichuan Opera Museum, they watched a captivating live performance, painted colorful opera masks, and immersed in the wonderful world of traditional Chinese theater. The group also visited SERES Group and the Mingyue Lake International Smart Industry Innovation Park, where they witnessed the rapid growth of China's modern smart industries through cutting-edge technologies and innovative business models. At the Liberation Monument and Hongyadong and on a cruise along the Yangtze and Jialing rivers, the dazzling lights and vibrant cityscape offered them a vivid glimpse into Chongqing's urban splendor.



After leaving central urban Chongqing, the delegation traveled to Dazu and Hechuan to explore more of the region's cultural treasures. At the Dazu (Big-foot Budha) Rock sculpture site—known for its world-renowned masterpieces of stone carving art—the lifelike sculptures, remarkably well-preserved after over a millennium of weathering, each tells ancient stories. The faculty and students were deeply impressed by the exquisite craftsmanship of ancient Chinese artisans and the profound richness of traditional Chinese culture. In Laitan Ancient Town in Hechuan, they strolled along stone-slab streets, mesmerized by the town's timeless charm and historical ambiance. Standing by the old city walls of the historic Diaoyu Fortress, they seemed to witness the heroic scenes of valiant Chinese soldiers bravely defending their homeland, which evoked a deep sense of admiration and respect. The delegation also visited Chengdu, where they had the chance to see China's beloved giant pandas up close and observe the ongoing development of the Chengdu–Chongqing Economic Circle.

The hope of the China-U.S. relationship lies in the people; its foundation, in our societies; its future depends on the youth; its vitality comes from exchanges at subnational levels. This "Zhi-Xing Chongqing" journey was an active response to that vision. By building a bridge of friendship and exchanges between young people from both countries, the program has helped foster mutual understanding and interaction, injecting new vitality and hope into the future of people-to-people exchanges between China and the United States.

Gaining a Multi-Perspective Understanding of BRI Through Universities, Think Tanks, and Investment Banks

From January 3 to 12, 2025, a winter camp jointly organized by Beijing Normal University

(BNU) and the College of William & Mary was successfully held in Beijing. As a key platform for BNU to integrate humanities and social sciences resources and to foster international people-to-people cultural exchanges, the Jingshi Academy of the Institute of Chinese Culture (ICC) collaborated with the Global Research Institute at the College of William & Mary in cohosting this event. The camp provided 20 students from William & Mary's Global Scholar Program with a firsthand opportunity to experience Chinese society and culture, helping them understand China's wisdom and solutions for global development and governance. In ten days, the campers engaged in diversified learning sessions, including lecture series, field visits, cultural activities, academic tours, and group discussions—immersive experiences which deepened their understanding of contemporary China's development.



Xiao Kai, Deputy Dean of ICC Jingshi Academy, spoke at the opening ceremony. He warmly welcomed the William & Mary delegation, reviewed the two institutions' deep friendship and their collaboration for over 30 years, and expressed the hope that the event would not only offer campers opportunities to have a true, multi-dimensional, and panoramic view of China, but also strengthen bilateral cooperation and exchange. He noted that BNU's aim of establishing the Jingshi Academy at the ICC and its master's-degree program of Global Development and Governance was to focus on

the UN SDGs and the Three Global Initiatives, promote world youth academic exchanges, and advance mutual learning among civilizations. He invited the winter campers to join the program in the future and become envoys of China-U.S. cultural exchange.

Dr. Kyuri Park, the faculty leader of the William & Mary delegation, thanked Jingshi Academy for its warm hospitality and expressed the hope for the students to seize the opportunity to learn from Chinese scholars' perspectives on global development, ensuring a fruitful experience.

Yang Lichao, Associate Professor at BNU's School of Sociology, delivered a lecture entitled Economic Reforms in the PRC—An Overview. From the lens of global development and governance, he detailed China's actions since the start of its reform and opening-up to advance socioeconomic development and promote social equity as well as their global impacts. The students listened attentively and engaged in the Q&As and discussions actively, showing keen interest in China's economic and social transformation.



At Tsinghua University, the campers attended the China Forum·Dialogue with the Wise (7): China's Role from a Global Perspective, a seminar co-hosted by the China Forum of the university's Center for International Security and Strategy (CISS) and Schwarzman College. The participating experts addressed topics including major-country relations from a global perspective, China's role and positioning in global development, and its foreign policy, followed by a Q&A session with

student representatives. Dr. Park emphasized the program's goal to broaden the students' global outlook, enhance their understanding of China, and strengthen China-U.S. academic exchange. Zhou Bo, a CISS research fellow and expert for China Forum, analyzed the evolving international landscape and China's significant role in global affairs through theories of international relations and strategic development.

An Gang, the special expert of CISS, discussed current trends of China-U.S. exchange and cooperation as well as future prospects of China-U.S. people-to-people and academic exchanges, citing case studies. Sun Chenghao analyzed China's international strategy, stressing the importance of China-U.S. relations for global development. In the interactive segment, the faculty and students from William & Mary actively raised questions on China's positioning in global development, regional security, and key variables in China-U.S. relations under a second Trump presidency, amid lively discussions.



The campers also visited BNU's Belt and Road School where they had a dialogue with the student representatives from 17 Global South countries studying at BNU. The heated and candid discussions covered green BRI international cooperation, uneven global development, and opportunities for their home countries to collaborate with China. Students with various cultural backgrounds shared their experiences and feelings of studying in China. Many international students noted that

they chose to study in China over traditional developed countries in Europe and the U.S. because China's economic development journey and poverty alleviation successes could offer more meaningful experience in practice for their own countries' development.

Stephen Lee Moreau, one of the campers, said, "I grew up in China's Yunnan Province before returning to the U.S. for high school. China is my homeland. Now, I am back to China visiting Beijing. I am so proud to see China's progress during these years. My U.S. peers have been to many Euro-American cities and heard views of many mainstream media, but their understanding of China is always partial. This camp, especially the dialogues with international students at BNU, enabled us to hear voices of different countries and regions. Now, we have a more holistic view of China's role as a responsible major country in the world and have a clearer view of China in the eyes of youth from the rest of the world. This is more important than anything else. Given opportunities in the future, I will also become an envoy of China-U.S. friendship to pass on the love in my heart."

For this winter camp, no chartered bus was provided as is traditionally done. Instead, the campers were led to navigate Beijing's "urban capillaries"—the city's subway network. Sailor Miao, leader of the delegation, explained, "We didn't want to shuttle the students between attractions like canned sardines. Taking the subway together enabled them to feel Beijing's urban vibe directly." A camper remarked, "Beijing's subway is clean and tidy, with good facilities for guidance and very convenient mobile payment methods. The platform murals of every subway line vividly display the city's cultural essence. Though a little tiring, the subway-only commute was a refreshing experience."

California State University Delegation Visits Shanghai International Studies University

From January 5 to 15, a delegation of eleven faculty members and students from California State University, Long Beach visited Shanghai International Studies University (SISU) under the YES program.



During the visit, the American visitors engaged in in-depth interactions with Chinese professors and volunteer students, forging deep friendships. Prof. Tian Xiaoyong gave a lecture on *The Beauty of Language* emphasizing the power and impacts of language. He elaborated on the close ties between language and culture, the multidimensional elements of language expression, the timeless charm of language in classical literature production, and the vital role of translation/interpretation in connecting China with the world and shaping the future. Prof. Huang Jianqin from the School of Chinese Studies and Exchange introduced Chinese character culture through a calligraphy session, describing the evolution of the five major script styles: seal, clerical, cursive, running, and regular. Under his guidance, the Long Beach delegation picked up Chinese brushes for the first time, experiencing the unique charm of Chinese calligraphy with each stroke.

At the Museum of World Languages, SISU, the Chinese and American faculty and students explored together the deep connections between global languages and civilizations

through multimodal exhibits. They gained an insight into the diversity of world languages and learned about a vision of a shared future for mankind. To help the American guests experience traditional Chinese culture and festivities, the program included a dumpling-making activity. From unfamiliarity to proficiency, the apprentices learned attentively, with each focused expression and every formed dumpling reflecting a deep appreciation and respect for Chinese culinary culture.



Strolling along the Bund, the visitors were struck by the grandeur of the time-honored international architecture, feeling the weight of history. Standing in the heart of the Lujiazui Financial Center, they sensed the vibrant pulse of a modern metropolis. Wandering through the winding alleys of Tianzifang, they experienced the everyday charm and artistic vibe unique to old Shanghai. At Chenghuang Temple, the ancient architecture and bustling market enveloped them in a rich traditional atmosphere. There, tradition and modernity converged, with Shanghai's unique charm captivating each member of the delegation like a magnet.

The trip to Hangzhou unfolded like a poetic scroll. Mesmerized in the reflections of West Lake's shimmering waters, the group leisurely strolled along the Su and Bai causeways, delighting in the lively scenes at Viewing Fish at the Flower Pond. A gentle boat ride brought them up close to the magical view of Three Pools Mirroring the Moon, as if stepping into a dreamscape. At Lingyin Temple, the lingering

tolls of the temple bell created a sense of serenity and peace. On Hefang Street, an array of traditional snacks and handcrafted items vividly showcased the cultural richness of the Jiangnan region, leaving the visitors enchanted and longing for more.



At the closing ceremony, the SISU host reviewed the history of collaboration between the two universities and extended congratulations on the successful completion of this exchange visit, expressing the hope for stronger continuous ties through longstanding in-depth cooperation. Mariana Barrios, leader of the CSULB delegation, expressed heartfelt thanks to the Chinese host for the warm hospitality, noting that the visit had given them a better understanding of China and fostered valuable cross-cultural friendship. In a warm and lively atmosphere, the faculty and students of both universities shared their reflections, bringing the event to a perfect close.

2025 Princeton Study Tour Hosted by Zhejiang University of Technology

Jointly organized by Zhejiang University of Technology (ZJUT) and Princeton University, the Princeton in Hangzhou Study Tour kicked off on January 5, 2025 and concluded on January 18. Fifteen faculty members and students from Princeton University participated in the tour. Under the theme of *Society, History, and Culture in Southeast China: Hangzhou at the Center*, the two-week study tour featured a well designed schedule including field visits, cultural lectures, and

discussion sessions, offering the participants a vivid picture of China.



Through the tour, the students gained an understanding of Hangzhou as a city steeped in history and culture. At West Lake and Lingyin Temple, they marveled at the garden design philosophy characterized by "a different view at every step". Through a guided tour, they learned about Su Shi's water management wisdom embodied in "Sudi Chunxiao (Dawn in the Su Causeway Spring)". While listening to the *Legend of the White Snake* at Leifeng Pagoda, they engaged in a lively discussion on the differences between Chinese and Western mythological narratives.

To understand the rapid growth of China's e-commerce, the delegation visited Alibaba and the Yiwu International Trade City. At the Cainiao Group, they witnessed how AI dynamically coordinates the national logistical network and handles up to 180,000 orders per second. One student exclaimed, "This is the Dujiangyan Project in the digital economy era!"



The students were also impressed by the interaction and integration between China's traditions and its modern urban culture. In

Qingshan Village, they followed an inheritor of intangible cultural heritage to make animal-shaped pouches using traditional techniques, exploring firsthand how cultural IP can be transformed into creative products. At the observation deck of the Shanghai World Financial Center in Lujiazui, as they appreciated the historic and modern views on both sides of the Huangpu River, one student remarked, "I now realize that the concept of 'harmony between man and nature' applies not only to natural landscapes, but also to cities."

They also experienced authentic Chinese family culture. Hosted by some families of the ZJUT faculty, the students and faculty from Princeton University joined in activities such as wrapping zongzi (sticky rice dumplings) and dumplings, practicing Chinese calligraphy, paper cutting for window decoration, and tasting Longjing tea, immersing themselves in Chinese daily life.

In addition, the students also had in-depth discussions with student representatives from ZJUT on topics such as the latest developments in AI and digital technology, and the translation art and appreciation of Chinese and American literary works. These activities highlighted the shared views and differences between the hosts and the guests on matters of common interest and enhanced their mutual understanding and friendship.



At the closing ceremony, Weaver John, a student representative from Princeton University remarked, "This two-week immersive course in

Hangzhou was a transformative and profound learning experience, and an unforgettable first trip to China." Christina Li said, "Finally, I understand what Bai Juyi meant when he wrote: 'Among all the memories of regions south of the Yangtze River, the most memorable is Hangzhou. When can I visit again?' Thank you, Hangzhou! We will meet again."

2025 Princeton Study Tour was designed as a short-term exchange and learning project to advance China-U.S. youth exchanges by offering students from Princeton University an opportunity to experience in person and understand both China's traditional culture and Chinese path to modernization.

Augustana College Delegation Visits Xi'an Jiaotong University

From January 11 to 16, a delegation of 24 faculty and students from Augustana College, the United States, visited Xi'an Jiaotong University to participate in a dedicated 2025 Asian Studies project under the Young Envoys Scholarship program. The opening ceremony was held at the Xi'an Jiaotong University Museum, which serves as the Xi'an Base of the China International Youth Exchange Center.



Rooted in the deep cultural heritage of this ancient capital, the rich folk art of western China, and the region's school-enterprise integration strategy, the 2025 YES Asian Studies project was designed around three core

academic themes: tangible cultural heritage, intangible cultural heritage, and school-enterprise integration.

At the Xi'an Jiaotong University Museum, the delegation, led by Deputy Curator Li Yiming, toured exhibitions featuring farmer paintings, calligraphy, stone inscriptions, historical artifacts from various dynasties, and Qinqiang opera. Through engaging with these cultural relics, the participants deepened their understanding of Chinese culture. In the Chinese shadow puppetry gallery, they learned to perform this art under the guidance of an inheritor of Western Shaanxi shadow puppetry, an intangible cultural heritage. In the Qinqiang opera exhibition hall, they experienced face painting with instructions from professional artists. At the Tin Ka Ping Art Building, the faculty and students visited the Tang Zhongying Art Courtyard as well as the laboratory and exhibition hall featuring a project named as Digitized Chinese Art Found Abroad, a project jointly run by the University of Chicago and Xi'an Jiaotong University. There, they held a discussion with Ouyang Zhenyu of the project. Using the U.S. Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art and the Longmen Grottoes in Luoyang as case studies, they learned about 3D scanning and digital imaging technologies for cultural heritage preservation as well as the related practices in China-U.S. collaboration.



On January 15, the delegation visited LONGi Green Energy Technology Co., Ltd., a global leader in solar energy technology. They toured

the Smart Energy Exhibition Hall, learned about innovations in photovoltaic solar panels and their applications, and met with the manager of the company's university-business partnership operations to learn about corporate energy utilization, carbon-neutral development, and overseas internship opportunities.

The group also visited Xi'an Museum, the Ming Dynasty City Wall as a UNESCO-listed world heritage, and the Terracotta Soldiers and Horses site, gaining firsthand experience of the rich cultural and historical heritage of the Shaanxi region. These visits provided insights into China's ancient architectural paradigms and the harmonious integration of urban development and heritage preservation.



The visit of the Augustana College delegation was part of a broader series of the Young Envoys Scholarship projects organized by Xi'an Jiaotong University in 2025. The projects are aimed at enhancing people-to-people exchanges between Chinese and international students, fostering a deeper understanding of China's development, and promoting the university's ongoing strategy of internationalization and integration of education with industry.

UM-SJTU JI M-Engin Program Charts a Blueprint for Sustainable Development

From March 2 to 9, the University of Michigan-Shanghai Jiao Tong University Joint Institute (UM-SJTU JI) hosted students for the UM Ann



Arbor M-Engin short-term overseas studies program. With "Cities in Global Sustainable Development" as its theme, the program was designed to deepen the students' understanding of the core principles of sustainability and enhance their cross-cultural adaptability and innovation capabilities as future global engineers—through a series of site visits, interactive learning activities, and hands-on challenges. In the one-week program, the students gained not only a deeper understanding of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but also valuable insights into Shanghai and China's practices and innovations in urban sustainability, laying a solid foundation for their future engineer roles in advancing sustainable development worldwide.

During the program, the students engaged in a variety of field trips to experience Shanghai's sustainability practices in multiple dimensions. Starting from SJTU's Minhang campus, they adopted greener transportation modes such as the subway, shared bikes, and buses to visit sites including Longhua, Changfeng Park, Xuhui Riverside, Runway Park, Wukang Mansion, Columbia Circle, and the Xujiahui Cathedral. These excursions provided a deeper glimpse into Shanghai's urban culture and its ongoing exploratory efforts toward sustainable development. At Changfeng Park, the students observed the importance of urban green spaces in enhancing the quality of life. In Xuhui

Riverside, they saw how former industrial sites had been transformed into multifunctional waterfront spaces blending culture, recreation, and ecology. They appreciated the integration of historical preservation with modern urban growth through the visits to Wukang Mansion and Columbia Circle. These field study visits offered the students a direct observation and understanding of the multidimensional aspects of sustainable development and sparked deeper reflections on urban planning and design.



A visit to the Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Center offered the students a comprehensive overview of the city's evolution, current state, and future planning. Through a wide array of models, interactive displays, and multimedia technologies, the exhibition center vividly illustrated Shanghai's transformation from a fishing village into a global metropolis. A large-scale city sandbox allowed the students to observe the city's layout, including the Financial District, historic protection districts, and emerging technology parks along the Huangpu River. The dynamic imaging and VR simulations showcased in depths Shanghai's sustainable development efforts in transportation, energy, and the environment, such as the application of the smart traffic control system, the promotion of green architecture, and the widespread adoption of waste sorting. The center introduced, in particular, the city's innovative practices in urban renewal, including adaptive reuse of historic buildings and successful community-building initiatives.



The students also visited Xinhua Community, a model for sustainable urban living in Shanghai, where they explored multifunctional public facilities and green zones at the Community Building Center. Guided by a community leader, they learned how innovative design improves the residents' quality of life through features like a community garden, shared kitchens, and multipurpose activity rooms. Through conversations with residents and local business owners, the students examined the practices and strategies as well as ongoing challenges related to waste sorting, energy conservation, and public participation. They also took part in a hands-on Community Building Workshop where they proposed creative ideas for sustainable community development based on their observations and insights. These activities helped deepen the students' understanding of sustainability efforts at the community level while developing their creative thinking and teamwork capability.

For the corporate visit segment, the students went to NIO and the Trip.com Group where they learned about the companies' innovations and achievements in Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) practices. At NIO's factory, they gained an insight into the green manufacturing technologies used in electric vehicle production and the company's efforts to reduce carbon emissions and promote clean energy applications. They were particularly impressed by NIO's models, battery-swap technology, and business model. At the Trip.com Group headquarters, the students

explored how the company applied digital technologies to enhance sustainability in tourism, including through green travel products and the rural revitalization campaign. These visits broadened the students' horizons and inspired them to integrate the sustainability concept into their future career development.

As the program was drawing to an end, the students participated in a 48-hour Urban Sustainability Challenge in Shanghai, in which they were required to apply their knowledge and field experiences to reflect on sustainability issues confronted in the city's everyday life. The students were to work in teams, with each identifying a specific urban sustainability challenge in Shanghai, proposing an innovative solution or solutions, and presenting their innovative ideas and insights through a video and poster. They discussed such topics as green transportation, community development, cultural heritage preservation, and smart cities before finally deciding on their respective research orientation. During the presentation segment of the Challenge, the students vividly showcased their ideas and reflections through videos and posters. The judges spoke highly of their innovative thinking and practical abilities, followed by constructive suggestions for further optimization.



This short-term study abroad program not only broadened the visiting students' perspectives and enhanced their professional skills. More importantly, it deepened their understanding of the significance and complexity of sustainable

development. They came to realize the imperative for future global engineers to embed the sustainability concept into their designs and balance economic, social, and environmental demands. The field visits, interactive learning, and practical challenges not only strengthened their grasp of the SDGs, but also improved their capabilities in interdisciplinary collaboration, innovative thinking, and problem solving, laying a solid foundation for their future career development in engineering.

Experiencing China Speed at Pandas' Hometown

On March 4, a group of 20 students and faculty from Foote School in New Haven, Connecticut, led by Principal Ms. Alewa Luquetta Cooper, gathered at Southwest Jiaotong University to participate in the Experiencing the China Speed at Pandas' Hometown, a short-term cultural exchange program under the YES Program.



During the seven-day program, the American delegation visited the Key Laboratory of Magnetic Suspension Technology and Maglev Vehicles under the Ministry of Education and the Maglev Test Line at Southwest Jiaotong University; through popular science lectures, the visitors learned about the principle behind magnetic levitation and China's forward-looking vision for developing green transportation. The group also experienced the excitement of low-temperature superconducting maglev

technology through interactive demonstrations. In addition, by riding on China's metro and high-speed rail, they had a firsthand encounter with the renowned "China Speed", with all members full of praise for the rapid development and remarkable convenience of China's modern transportation infrastructure.



In Chengdu—the hometown of the giant panda—the delegation visited the Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding, where they observed at close range the daily lives and habits of China's beloved national treasure. At a study-sharing session, the students actively exchanged their insights and reflections, engaging in a lively discussion on wildlife conservation.

The group also explored the Dujiangyan Irrigation System—a UNESCO-listed world heritage site, where they gained an appreciation for ancient Chinese ingenuity in water management and the water conservation system's enduring contribution to Chengdu's sustainable urban development. Their journey continued to the Sichuan Museum, the historic Kuanzhai Alleys of Chengdu, Baoguo Temple on Mount Emei, and the Leshan Giant Buddha, which all impressed them with the unique geographical features and distinctive charm of Sichuan's "Shu culture".

The American faculty and students also engaged with the university's lion dance team and experienced the traditional art form recognized as an intangible cultural heritage. They enthusiastically practiced drumming techniques and lion dance moves under the

guidance of the university's performers. In a music workshop, the faculty and students learned the Chinese song *Chengdu*, which they sang in chorus as well as the song *Dayu* (Big Fish) at the program's closing ceremony. They also recited in Mandarin the Chinese poem "Where Is Ancient China?".



The exchange program consisted of a packed and well-structured itinerary, cross-cultural elements, and immersive experiences, with its features of "Exploring the millennia-charm of China by entering Sichuan, understanding modern China by visiting Chengdu, and witnessing development achievements by riding on high-speed trains". It is designed to offer the American visitors an opportunity for a deeper understanding of Chinese culture, history, and society. In addition, in light of their cultural experiences, academic exploration, and hands-on learning in Sichuan, the delegation also engaged in in-depth discussions on global topics such as green transportation and sustainable development, and ecological conservation for wildlife.

Southwest Jiaotong University hopes to take this program as an opportunity to integrate its academic strengths with studies on the distinctive elements of Chinese culture and global issues in order to enhance the quality of short-term exchange programs. The university is committed to the continuous development of high-quality China-U.S. cultural exchange projects under the YES program, meeting the growing demand for international collaboration and fostering more effective

friendly exchanges between Chinese and American students.

Experiencing the Charm of Southern Guangdong Bay Area and Exploring Chaoshan Folk Culture

On March 6 the curtain fell on the "Understanding China—Experiencing the Charm of Southern Guangdong Bay Area" short-term exchange program for American youth, a program hosted by Guangdong Engineering Polytechnic under the guidance of the Department of Education of Guangdong Province. During their 7-day trip to Guangdong Province, 11 faculty and students from Bellevue University in Nebraska, USA experienced the modern vitality of Guangzhou as an international metropolis, strolled through the ancient alleys of Chaoshan to appreciate the elegance of tea culture, and visited the She [shə] Autonomous Village in Raoping County to witness the vibrant rural revitalization.



► Cultural exchange as a bridge—the Fusion of Southern Guangdong Bay Area charms

In Guangzhou, capital of the province, the American faculty and students visited the Chen Clan Ancestral Hall—an architectural gem, viewed the water-town scenery of Lychee Bay and the lush spring vibes of Yuexiu Park, enjoyed the melodic singing of Cantonese opera at the Cantonese Opera Art Museum, and tried their hands at the delicate Canton embroidery in Yongqing Fang. A night cruise on

the Pearl River, with its dazzling city lights, left them in awe of the city's modern dynamism.

Upon arriving in the Chaoshan region in eastern Guangdong Province, they were amazed at the ingenious structure of the Guangji Bridge featuring "18 wooden boats and 24 piers" and the Tang and Song architectural styles of Kaiyuan Temple, which convey Chaozhou's rich cultural legacy. At the Chaoshan Historical Culture Expo Center, they marveled at the magnificent air of Yingge dance. Tasting Kung Fu Tea at Zaiyang Teahouse, they were mesmerized by the elegant aesthetics and intoxicating aroma of China's tea culture.

The journey to Lingnan (aka, Guangdong Province) offered the American youth a glimpse of the twin jewels of Cantonese and Chaoshan cultures and, through vivid examples of intangible heritage preservation and revitalization of ancient architecture, allowed them to witness the creative continuation of traditional Chinese culture in the modern era.



► Blossoming rural revitalization with folk customs as a link

At the Dakeli Tea Factory in Raoyang Town, Li Shizhong, one of the Top 10 Chaoshan Tea Grandmasters, introduced in detail the culture of Dancong tea (with tea leaves picked from a single well-cultivated tree), followed by an onsite observation of the entire tea-making process from raw leaves to the finished product. In the Lanwu She Autonomous Village, the group visited Taihua Building, a provincial-level cultural heritage site and were captivated

by the unique architectural style and rich historical heritage of the She people's walled houses. In front of the circular dwellings, they watched and participated in the She people's bamboo pole dance, feeling the warmth and vitality of the She people.

At the spinning top ground, they enthusiastically enjoyed and tried their hand at this traditional She ethnic sport game in a lively and engaging atmosphere. Their visit coincided with a themed event in the village organized by students from Raoping No. 4 Middle School to learn from Lei Feng, a model soldier who had devoted his life to serving the people selflessly. The American and Chinese youths had a friendly exchange, shared their thoughts on rural development, and appreciated together the new face of the countryside.



► A new chapter in Sino-American educational exchange based on academic collaboration

During their visit, the Bellevue University faculty and students had in-depth exchanges with their counterparts in the Computer Application Technology and Art & Design disciplines at Guangdong Engineering Polytechnic. At the School of Art & Design, the students from both institutions held lively discussions on design concepts and the integration of traditional culture with modern creativity. During a Chinese calligraphy session, the American guests wrote the phrase "Contentment brings happiness", experiencing the unique charm of traditional culture and Chinese philosophy. At the College of Intelligent Engineering, discussions were

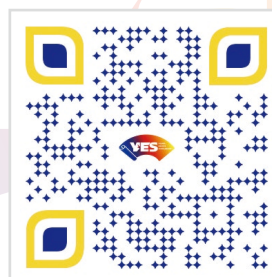
held on topics such as AI technologies and computer applications like DeepSeek; through an interactive dialogue on cultivating hi-tech skilled talent with global perspectives, the Chinese and American youths explored the integration of technology and humanities.



In 2023, Guangdong Engineering Polytechnic and Bellevue University established a partnership and have since carried out multiple substantive collaborations in mutual credit recognition, Sino-foreign cooperative education, and cultural exchange projects. The successful conclusion of the "Understanding China—Experiencing the Charm of the Southern Guangdong Bay Area" program enabled the visiting American youth not only to appreciate the heritage and innovation of Lingnan culture and witness the ongoing practice of rural revitalization in China, but to go beyond just "seeing" China to better "understanding" it as well.

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