



Highlights

- 01 Understanding Contemporary China–International Program offered by Zhejiang International Studies University
- 02 2025 Southeast University-UPenn "Innovative Ruralscape" Summer School
- 03 Composing a New Chapter–Coole ElbStreicher Performs at Shanghai Jincai Experimental Primary School
- 04 IU Delegation Joins XJTU for Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Development Program
- 05 OUC-NU Blue Ocean Study Tour Program Held in Ocean University of China
- 06 Utah Youth Visit Zhengzhou Electric Power College to Build a New Bridge

Understanding Contemporary China— International Program offered by Zhejiang International Studies University

Twelve students from Wayne State University in the United States joined peers at Zhejiang International Studies University (ZISU) for the International Academic Program: Understanding Contemporary China for Chinese & American Youth. Over the course of a week, they enjoyed an immersive cultural journey: from Liangzhu jade relics to ancient texts in a classics archive, and from Su Dongpo's poetry to a stroll around West Lake. They had a sampling of the five-millennia-old Chinese civilization while discovering the authentic face of China today.



On May 23, after the opening ceremony, the students held a birthday celebration for the group teacher and a participant named Sandra. The American students cheerfully shouted "Happy Birthday" in Chinese, which they had just learned, and sang the birthday song. Embellished with candlelight and laughter, the brief celebration carried blessings that transcended borders. During the icebreaker game, the Chinese and American participants built towers with spaghetti and marshmallows, which helped them quickly break down barriers in communication and initial unfamiliarity. Finally, through teamwork, they jointly accomplished what had seemed an impossible mission. Later, in a Chinese-word-chain game, one of the participants Emilia said with a smile, "My Chinese classmate

taught me how to write my name in Chinese and explained its meaning. It was the first time I realized how rich in meaning Chinese characters can be."

On May 24, all the students listened to an in-depth exposition by Prof. Zhao Yang of Peking University on Chinese culture as a bridge for communication, characterized by its historical continuity and inclusiveness. The lecture offered a window on Chinese society and culture and helped facilitate mutual understanding and cross-cultural exchange. In the afternoon, the students gathered for a culture sharing session for a roundtable discussion on co-authoring a paper. Each participant introduced the theme that he or she was interested in and presented a thoughtful statement and analysis. From different perspectives, they explored Chinese culture as reflected in daily life, such as clothing, medicine, and food, sharing insightful ideas and unique perspectives.



On May 25, the group visited the Liangzhu Ruins Museum in Hangzhou, embarking on a journey to explore China's civilization thousands of miles from their homes. In the striking contrast between Eastern and Western cultures, they learned about the unique charm of Liangzhu, as if traveling through time to engage in a profound dialogue with a civilization going back five thousand years. From intricately crafted jadeware to simple pottery and stone tools, each artifact embodied the wisdom and creativity of the Liangzhu

people, leaving the American students in awe. Pausing before a jade *cong*, Sarah exclaimed: "The craftsmanship from 5,000 years ago is so intricate! My Chinese classmate told me that in ancient China, jade was viewed as a medium connecting heaven and earth, like the role of totems in Native American culture."



In the afternoon, the students watched Dongpo at West Lake, a Song Dynasty-style aesthetic residency show at Dongpo Grand Theater. Along the themes of his administrative achievements and poetry during his two tenures as a government functionary in Hangzhou, the show reenacted historical scenes of the great poet Su Dongpo who dredged the West Lake and build Su Causeway. Even after the show, the students remained captivated by the storyline. They displayed poses of the characters and had photos taken with the cast. The American students marveled, "Chinese poetry can be sung!"

On May 28, the students and teachers visited the Hangzhou Branch of the China National Archives of Publication and Culture for an intercultural dialogue across time and space. Guided by the docent, the Chinese and American campers had an in-depth look at the historical evolution of Chinese classical publications and the continuity of cultural heritage. They paused to observe bronze inscriptions, rare ancient books, and contemporary artistic editions, capturing details with their cameras. The valuable collection, along with woodblock printing

and digital display techniques, left a strong impression on the American participants, offering them a deeper appreciation of China's rich and time-honored culture.

At the afternoon cultural seminar, all the students presented their findings of the week-long survey. Emily, a medical major, said that her group had studied the differences between Chinese and Western medicine and found that both stress the importance of body-mind balance. Alex noted the contrast in career selection between Chinese and American youth, offering insights into the underlying causes. Others shared perspectives on literature, art, fashion, etc.

At the closing ceremony, Jiang Yuyi, a student majoring in Teaching Chinese to Speakers of Other Languages, Class of 2023, noted: "The program was designed to advocate harmony and seek common ground while putting aside minor differences, as respect for differences and mutual understanding are the basis of friendship." Emilia, representing the American students, said: "The most valuable takeaway from the program was breaking down many stereotypes and witnessing a real China. We also realized that across the ocean, we have friends who are both different and alike."

The "Understanding Contemporary China" course was a key component of the international curriculum. Through exchanges, the Chinese and American students increased their understanding of each other and of contemporary China.

2025 Southeast University-UPenn "Innovative Ruralscape" Summer School

May 25 witnessed the opening at Southeast University of the international summer school on "Innovative Ruralscape", jointly hosted by Southeast U and the UPenn, and co-organized by Anhui Jianzhu University and

Hefei University of Technology. As the first educational initiative in China featuring the educational practice of "China-U.S. Summer School in Rural Areas", it greeted over 60 faculty members and students from four Chinese and American universities for an academic dialogue across the Pacific.

Spanning 16 days from May 22 across Shanghai, Nanjing, Huizhou, and Hangzhou, the study program enabled the participants to gain a deeper understanding of the renewal of waterfront factories, explore the historic landscape amid the urban natural environment, decode the spatial patterns shaped by ancient waterways, and witness the experiment that allowed the coexistence of rammed-earth buildings and modern design. David Leatherbarrow, Dean of the Architecture Internationalization Demonstration School of Southeast University, noted: "The core issue in this study is to address the issue of bridging the urban-rural divide—a task that is by no means simple, but one of the most pressing issues in this field today."



The summer school focused on three topics: "Conceptual Cognition of and Path Exploration for Urban-Rural Integration", "Design Wisdom and New Potential in Rural Landscapes", and "Innovative Thinking and Creative Framework for a Rural Future". Through approaches such as archival research, fieldwork, and innovative design, the students yielded innovative outcomes with academic depth and practical value. Franca Trubiano, Associate

Professor and Graduate Group Chair (Ph.D. in Architecture) at the Stuart Weitzman School of Design, UPenn, remarked: "This visit to Southeast University provided our faculty and students a valuable opportunity to learn from the Chinese academic community."

The ties between Southeast U and UPenn go back more than a century and remain ever vibrant. In the 1920s, China's first generation of architecture students traveled to UPenn for their studies. Legendary figures such as Yang Tingbao and Tong Jun graduated with distinction and, upon returning to China, took up teaching at SEU. They not only laid the academic foundation of architecture at SEU, but also pioneered and steered the course of modern architectural practice and education in China. The summer school was organized in response to the China-U.S. people-to-people exchange initiative and as an extension of the academic discourse initiated by the 2024 exhibition themed "Design in Concert with Nature" to further interpret the aesthetic genes of China's rural landscape.

Composing a New Chapter—Coole ElbStreicher Performs at Shanghai Jincai Experimental Primary School

On May 30, Jincai Experimental Primary School in Shanghai's Pudong New Area celebrated International Children's Day with a vibrant cross-cultural musical feast. The children's youth orchestra Coole ElbStreicher presented the school's students and teachers with an immersive show and interactive workshop.

Founded in 2008 by cellist Gesa Riedel, Coole ElbStreicher is an innovative Hamburg-based string orchestra for young musicians aged 5 to 18. Dedicated to breaking away from traditional string education models, it blends classical, pop, rock, and film scores, emphasizes memorized performance and highly spontaneous stage

presentation, and encourages integrating dance and theatrical elements to create a strong artistic appeal. The orchestra had prepared a carefully curated repertoire for their visit to Jincai Experimental Primary School.

► Immersive performance ignites artistic passion

In the morning, the Coole ElbStreicher Orchestra staged a special concert in the school. From well-known classical pieces to trendy adaptations blended with pop and jazz, the performance carried the students into cinematic soundscapes in a sea of music. Infused with pop and jazz, the elegant melodies gained vibrant energy, prompting many children to sway to the beat.



► Classroom interaction deepens cultural understanding

After the concert, the orchestra members joined the children in their classrooms to play music games, teach basic string techniques, and share their own musical journeys, encouraging the children to pursue their musical dreams with courage. In this warm, lively, and amicable atmosphere, genuine understanding grew and lasting bonds were forged between Chinese and German youth.

The orchestra's visit filled the children's festival with joy and unforgettable memories. Opening a window to global musical cultures, the visit sparked their love for music, enriched their campus life, and broadened their international horizons.

IU Delegation Joins XJTU for Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Development Program

From May 21 to 24, a 21-member delegation from Indiana University (IU) visited Xi'an Jiaotong University (XJTU) to participate in the Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Development program. Indiana University, one of the oldest institutions west of the Appalachian Mountains, is widely recognized for its strengths in the humanities and social sciences in the U.S., with 85% of its graduate programs in social sciences ranking among the national top 20.

Associate Professor Liang Rui led a traditional culture and *guqin* (seven-string zither) class for the students and instructors from both universities. In the serene setting of a traditional music room, they explored the cultural origins of the ancient instrument and played the classical piece *High Mountains and Flowing Water*, a melody that symbolizes China-U.S. friendship.

Later in the day, student representatives from China and the U.S. explored the XJTU campus. Their tour included stops at the National Demonstration Center for Experimental Mechanics Education (NDCEME) in the School of Mechanical Engineering and the Dispersed Chinese Art Digitization Project (DCADP), a joint initiative between XJTU and the University of Chicago.

At NDCEME, the visitors observed and operated intelligent robotic vehicles with members of the VEX Robots Club. They also interacted with humanoid robots at the Intelligent Manufacturing Big Data Center.



At the Art Building, the teachers and students visited the exhibition hall showcasing DCADP's achievements. In particular, they explored XJTU's digital scanning and reconstruction collaboration with the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, UPenn, and University of Chicago involving damaged famous sculptures from the Tang and Northern Wei dynasties, including the Six Steeds of Zhao Mausoleum, with two of the horse sculptures in stone relief now found in the Upenn Museum. These fruits of cooperation demonstrated China-US joint practice in preserving sustainable cultural heritage.

On May 23, the Indiana U teachers and students visited the Xi'an Museum, the Ming Great Wall (a UNESCO World Heritage site), and the Emperor Qinshihuang's Mausoleum Ruins, through which they learned how Xi'an protects and sustainably develops both its tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

Upon concluding the program, the Chinese and U.S. participants signed an Initiative on Cultural Heritage Protection and Sustainable Development, pledging their joint commitment to the preservation and sustainable development of cultural heritage locally and around the world.

The XJTU-IU program, featuring industry-education integration and cultural inheritance, was aimed at deepening people-to-people exchanges between Chinese and international students.

OUC-NU Blue Ocean Study Tour Program Held in Ocean University of China

From June 2 to 15, Ocean University of China (OUC) hosted the "Blue Ocean" Program with the participation of 43 students from Nantes University (NU). OUC organized a variety of in-depth, result-oriented cultural exchanges and practices to foster mutual learning between Chinese and French teachers and students.

The successful event further strengthened the cooperation and interaction between the two universities in marine science and education.

The program, themed "Discovering Eastern Wisdom and Exploring the Blue Future", drew on OUC's strengths in marine research and education, offering distinctive courses and hands-on activities for cultural exchange, language learning, and marine knowledge.

OUC provided experienced teachers and professionally trained student volunteers who organized a wide range of high-quality cultural exchange activities. They helped the French participants enhance their practical Chinese skills through a language course and lectures on Chinese culture. Intangible cultural heritage activities such as Peking opera, Tai Chi, martial arts, and paper-cutting helped deepen their understanding of traditional Chinese culture. The visitors attended a special lecture at the marine research center and researched industrial chain development involving leading businesses in the region. They visited the Qingdao Museum and Qingdao Tianxiang Foods Group, focusing on the theme of "the Code of Urban Development". These activities demonstrated Qingdao's unique dual attractions as a "tech city with red roof tiles and green trees". They helped improve the students' cross-cultural communication capabilities and broaden their global outlook.



OUC also set up through innovation a "Tide Voice: Global Youth Dialogue" platform, which brought together multiple groups from China, the U.S., France, and Germany, comprising

over 100 young elites, including participants from NU. Under the theme of "Shared Voice of Tides, Connected Youth across the Globe", the platform had a three-dimensional dialogue mechanism centered on global issues, youth action, and mutual learning among civilizations. In-depth discussions were held on topics such as academic frontiers, mutual cultural learning, youth missions, social responsibility, marine sustainable development, and future cooperation. The exploration of infinite possibilities of joining hands to address global challenges effectively enhanced the Chinese and international students' cross-cultural communication skills and injected fresh vitality into sustained international campus development, global youth exchanges, and interaction among civilizations.



Under the dual themes of "mutual learning among civilizations" and "living with technology", the "Blue Ocean" program blended history, culture, science, academics, and friendship. It marked a meaningful exploration of broader and deeper sustained cooperation between the two universities, further deepening the consensus between OUC and its global partners and strengthening the exchanges among Chinese and international students and faculty.



The students and faculty from Nantes University actively engaged in OUC's activities, fully demonstrating their talent and potential. They hailed the program as "a journey of in-depth dialogue across civilizations" and spoke highly of China's achievements in the social, economic, cultural, and educational fields. The visiting participants said they were delighted to study on the beautiful campus, where they experienced the charm of traditional Chinese culture, discovered Qingdao's innovative vitality, improved their Chinese communication skills, and grew in newfound friendships—in an unforgettable experience of personal growth.



Through immersive cultural experiences and hands-on practices, the NU participants were able to appreciate the extensive and profound Chinese civilization and, more importantly, experience the unique appeal and strong efficacy of OUC's well-designed education system in promoting cultural exchange and mutual understanding. This program has greatly boosted the global visibility of the "Study at OUC" brand. By building quality platforms for international youth exchange, OUC has continued to foster in-depth dialogue and lasting bonds across borders.

To promote cultural exchange and friendly cooperation between Chinese and American youth, 45 teenagers and educators from Utah, USA arrived in China in June for a 10-

day cultural exchange and study tour. Well organized by Zhengzhou Electric Power College (ZEPC), the program had a focus on historical-cultural experience and exchange in electrical knowledge, which helped build a platform for in-depth interaction between the youth from the two nations and write a new chapter in China-US friendship.

The itinerary in China was rich and diverse. The visitors climbed the Great Wall, touched traces of history on the meandering walls, and marveled at the grandeur of this World Heritage site. While touring the Palace Museum built with royal yellow tiles and crimson walls, they admired the magnificence of imperial architecture. At the Shaolin Temple, they watched a Kung Fu performance and experienced the unique charm of martial art. By the Yi River, they visited the Longmen Grottoes and witnessed the outstanding artistry of ancient craftsmen. These immersive experiences provided the American youth with direct insights into traditional Chinese culture.

On their visit to ZEPC, the delegation focused its attention on exchanges in power technology. Guided by faculty members, the delegation toured the electrical safety immersive training lab and the 220kV smart substation training base, learning in detail and amazement about China's advanced technologies and innovations in smart grids and renewable energy generation. In addition, the visitors joined the Chinese students in making dumplings, painting cloud-shaped shoulder ornaments, crafting calligraphic fans, and learning Sichuan opera face-changing, which offered more opportunities to delve into China's history, culture, and technological development. The lively exchanges, technical discussions, and sharing with their counterparts throughout enhanced their understanding of China's vocational education and fostered cross-border friendships.

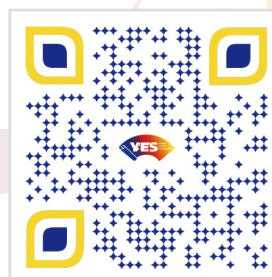


The fruitful exchange offered the American youth deeper insights into China's history, culture, social development, and achievements in power technology. More importantly, it helped build a bridge of friendship, mutual learning, and sharing of dreams between young people from both nations. Though they came from different cultural backgrounds, they were united by common interests and aspirations for the future, injecting youthful vitality into China-US people-to-people exchanges.



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